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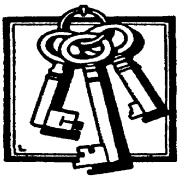

POLITICAL PROPAGANDA

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POLITICAL PROPAGANDA

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FOREWORD

In this book a brief attempt is made to look at the activities of modern political propaganda mainly from the point of view of a psychologist. Such an attempt seemed desirable because almost all of the principal exponents of political propaganda frequently claim that their practices are based upon a special knowledge of the psychology of "the masses." When this knowledge is critically considered it turns out to consist in a number of high-sounding generalisations for which not one scrap of empirical evidence, sufficient to convince anybody who is not already prejudiced in their favour, is offered. Perhaps for this the single-minded propagandist must not be very severely blamed. He does at least recognise that one of the most important things in the world is to understand how social forces can be roused and directed, and that this cannot be achieved unless a greater insight can be won into the ways in which the working of the human mind in society is controlled. If he considers, as apparently he does, that the way to achieve

this insight is to sit down in an armchair and think the matter out; to begin, not with a careful and as far as possible an experimental study of facts, but with the most sweeping generalisations, he is merely in line with the strange but common practice of mankind.

One thing, however, stands out in all the leading generalisations about the popular mind which the propagandists of dictator States have adopted and proclaimed, and this is an unshakable belief that people in the mass exhibit a childish, primitive, inferior, mean and altogether despicable intelligence. There is a danger lest the propagandists of the more democratic countries, imitating the methods of those first in the field, should assume also that their generalisations are sound. I have tried to show that such an assumption is not only unnecessary, but that it would be wholly destructive of the very foundation of democracy.

I am well aware that many who may read this book will consider that such analysis of propaganda and its methods as I have effected is superficial. There is little in these pages about cruelty, about instincts of destruction and about overmastering lust. There is little to suggest that the beast that lurks in every man is in charge of all the manifold activities of humanity. I know well that a very different analysis could be offered which would trace everything

to unconscious urges repressed and imprisoned from the childhood of mankind, but still active in their malevolent ways. I know well that there is much truth in this exaltation of the primitive and the unconscious ; but it is not the whole of the truth. It was doubtless necessary to get rid forever of the notion of man as simply a rational being moved only by intelligent considerations. But during these last years the pendulum has swung too far in the opposite direction. The picture of man as merely the sport of repressed urges which his conscious mind dislikes and disowns no more represents the complete person than did the earlier picture which it has sought to replace. Even the symbols much beloved of the propagandist do not collect the whole of their significance from a savage and horrid past. They are also a means of centralising and making concrete affections, loyalties and constructive impulses which are open for everybody to know and which have their basis largely in contemporary events. I believe too that man's conscious control of his own destinies is growing all the time and can, if only he likes, be made more and more complete.

If this is to happen, however, one enormous development will have to be effected. Science has gained control of material culture. It directs the production and distribution of very nearly all those

material means upon which ease, comfort and wealth depend. Every country in the world has spent vast sums of money to build up research, the main aim of which is the conquest of inanimate nature and the material world, and every country is satisfied that the return which has been secured is more than commensurate with the effort and the expenditure. But social and mental culture lag behind. Mankind has resources and does not know how to use them, so that even large masses of people may be induced to believe the most extraordinary things about themselves just because they are said with tremendous emphasis and assurance by any self-styled authority. Muddle and disorder inevitably follow and will continue, until science is given as great an opportunity to investigate and understand the human mind as it has been and is being given to discover and direct the processes of the external world.

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April 9, 1940.

POLITICAL PROPAGANDA

CHAPTER I

The Aims of Political Propaganda

To-day propaganda is in the air and on it. There is no escaping from its insistent voice. Even were it only half as effective as it is often claimed to be its power would be enormous. It is said to be able to determine the behaviour of the most obscure citizen, and at the same time to settle the destinies of the great nations. It is at work to fashion the education of the child, the ambitions of youth, the activities of the prime of life, and it pursues the aged to the grave. It has no respect for times, or seasons, or topics.

It is not at all easy to be sure what this tremendous growth of propaganda in the contemporary world signifies, whether it is a passing phase or something deep and permanent. Sometimes it seems as if the august nations of the world have become for the time like little boys at school who make horrid faces at one another and shout resounding threats. Then

again it seems as if behind all the tumult and the show there lies some obscure admission that the final forces which move the world of men are those powers which together make the human mind, powers which ambitious people, now more than ever, must know how to move to their own purposes, but which all the world is still strangely reluctant to study seriously.

Whatever the inordinately rapid growth of propaganda may signify, the main reasons for it are clear and certain enough. It springs fundamentally from those two closely related movements which are responsible for most of the perplexities of modern civilisation: the increasingly effective contact of social groups, and the rapid spread of popular education.

Only a short time ago social groups distant from one another in space had relatively clumsy and slow means of intercommunication. The leaders of one group could shape their internal policy with very little anxious and immediate consideration of the reactions which a change in that policy might produce in other groups. To-day it is not news only that flashes swiftly from end to end of the whole world. People, the elements of culture, the media of economic existence, ideas—all these can move with a freedom never before matched in history. And since it is contact with things that are different that

is beyond anything else the stimulant for change in human affairs, it has become vitally necessary for the leaders of all the great groups somehow to try to get control of the chief means of expanding contact and to use these to further their own ambition.

For this great growth of rapid exchange between one social group and another modern applied science is primarily responsible. The development of swift and easy forms of locomotion, the rise of a popular Press, the invention and universal use of the cinema, of wireless and of television, mean that no group can live to itself, or be left alone to die.

Perhaps more important still these and all the other inventions which facilitate swift and effective intercommunication are not merely toys or weapons for the favoured few. Most of them are already available to all, and more become available year by year. The enormous development of popular education in all the social groups of the modern world has increased beyond count the number of persons in every group who can and do take immediate advantage of the extending means of intercommunication. The barriers which the course of history and the ingenuity of man have built between group and group are threatened with destruction. A policy which formerly needed to be explained only to the few, and their assent gained before action, now must win the active support of the many. A precipitate

action must now be explained and justified at once to the most distant peoples, because the news of it will spread and its repercussions will be as wide and almost as quick as the travel of the news.

Even were the growth of popular education uniform throughout the world, the social perplexities which would arise would be tremendous. When, as is the case, the rising tide of education flows rapidly in one region, slowly in another, with all kinds of temporary set-backs and delays, and with occasional localised spectacular advances, it is no wonder that the complex difficulties produced often seem as if they must baffle all attempts at solution.

The rapid development of effective contact between different groups in contemporary society means that no important political, economic or other cultural change can take place anywhere which will not swiftly be treated as affecting the destinies of distant groups. The rise of popular education means that any major political, economic or other cultural change must be explained, or justified, to an ever-increasing number of people. These two movements together provide the setting and the fundamental conditions which have led to a terrific outburst of political propaganda.

Naturally they are not the only conditions. It so happens, for example, that just at a time when wide social contacts are more effective than ever before,

and when more people than ever before are being trained to take an interest in and become vocal about social, political and economic changes, the power to effect such changes has apparently, in several quarters, become concentrated in the hands of small groups, or of individuals. And it is these small dictator groups, or dictator individuals, who mainly have developed modern political propaganda. For there is this difference at least between the tyrant of the ancient world and the dictator of to-day, that the tyrant, in his relatively small and isolated group, could, within limits, do as he pleased and " damn the consequences." The modern dictator, holding the destinies of very large groups, and having to work in a most intricate pattern of threads of connexion between his own group and others, is forced to appeal for wide public approval and openly to try to justify what his private ambition prompts him to do. Nevertheless the basic conditions for the political propaganda of to-day, which give it its peculiar characteristics and make it a vital concern of every large State, no matter what its political constitution, are these two : the increasing contact of differently organised social groups, and the spread of popular education.

Practically everybody agrees that propaganda must be defined by reference to its aims. Those aims can, in fact, be stated simply. Propaganda is

an attempt to influence opinion and conduct—especially social opinion and conduct—in such a manner that the persons who adopt the opinions and behaviour indicated do so without themselves making any definite search for reasons. Although the spread of education is one of the primary conditions from which political propaganda has sprung, yet the aims of the latter are different from those of the former and may be sharply opposed to them.

Education also is an attempt to influence and control thinking and conduct, but to do so in such a manner that the persons who think and act are stimulated to seek to understand for themselves why they do what they do. It goes without saying that much of what appears in every public system of education takes a form more appropriate to the aims of propaganda. Indeed it must be so, because in general actions have to be taken and opinions adopted before intelligence can be sufficiently developed to worry much about reasons. Whether in the case of the individual or of the social group, the early stages of education must come very near to the characteristic forms of propaganda. But there is a vital distinction between a propaganda which is designed to fix people forever at its own level, and a propaganda which is designed to lead those to whom it is directed through the necessary preliminary steps to education.

Apart from this, there are strong reasons why no modern State can afford to neglect political propaganda. As has been indicated already, however self-contained a State may set out to be as regards its internal policy, it cannot possibly escape external relations with other States more or less on a level with itself. The practical questions which arise as a result are often of extreme urgency, and cannot wait until the very large numbers of people who are naturally interested in them have had time to appreciate and weigh up the reasons for them. The leaders of a State are frequently forced somewhat hurriedly to adopt a policy which affects the interests of their own immediate followers and of the members of other States. They must justify this policy after the decision and must do so publicly. Actually the political propaganda of contemporary life is generally first developed by the State, within that State, for its own inhabitants. There is nothing surprising in this since, for reasons which will become clear later in the present discussion, internal propaganda is definitely easier than external, especially for highly self-contained States. Nevertheless external propaganda is probably of greater importance to every large group in modern society, and its neglect may run any such group into serious peril.

Whether propaganda is used as a first-aid to education in a relatively backward community, whether

it takes the form of a suggestive statement of policy addressed to other groups of a similar level of culture, or whether it is an organised effort to produce uniformity of opinion and conduct throughout the membership of the group itself, it should be regarded as an episode, a temporary necessary expedient. If it develops into a hardened institution, contaminating the flow and usurping the place of genuine education, it does so because there are forces at work trying to keep the mass of the people addressed permanently in the position of infants in arms.

This is precisely what occurs whenever political propaganda becomes a weapon to be used by the single dominant Party in the totalitarian State. Within any such State, therefore, when propaganda develops vigorously, there is always a huge implied gap between those who control publicity, and those whom they attempt to control by its means. To a superficial view the gap may not appear at all, but it is there, a possible line of disastrous division. It is one of the curious things about human society that, where potentialities of division are very numerous, the possibility of serious splitting may be at a minimum, but where possible lines of division are few, the group may be in serious danger of radical deterioration. For when potentialities of division are numerous, if a split occurs it is likely to affect

individuals or small groups of individuals only, leaving the general society not much upset. But where there are one or two simple lines of possible cleavage, any actual division works disaster to the whole group.

Political propaganda used by the single Party must address large masses of people and attempt to move them to uniformity of opinion and of action. Since the great aim is to get results, and not at all to promote or stimulate understanding of the results, the more whole-hearted and single-minded the propagandist is, the more his methods make it plain that he thinks that the individuals with whom he has to deal are a very poor lot, and especially that they are, and should stay, at a low level of intellectual development. It is true that one of the tricks of his procedure is to tell them that they are much better than other people. The fact remains that the whole implication of his method of appeal is that he arrogates to himself a superiority which he permanently and finally denies to others. He pretends that he alone can think constructively; that he has the finer feelings; that his is the responsibility of decision and others have only the right and obligation of acceptance. Between him and his public, wherever it may be and however it may be made up, there is a great gulf fixed, and the widest part of that gulf—it is implied—marks a difference of

intelligence. This is the claim, sometimes loudly asserted, but always present.

Nobody needs to go far with psychology in order to learn that the people who make a great parade of their superiority very rarely are actually superior. They may be, but as a general rule the repeated assertion of superiority springs from a deep and only imperfectly realised suspicion that others are, in fact, better equipped, particularly in those very directions in which the greatest superiority is most emphatically claimed. Especially is this true when intelligence is the quality upon which stress is laid. The intelligent man and group are the first to recognise and to stimulate the intelligence of others. It is now clear enough that the distribution of intelligence is not markedly variable in any large group taken at random anywhere throughout the civilised world, and it is wildly improbable that any small group, not selected primarily and specifically for intelligence, should be, in fact, supreme in brain power. In particular, there is so far no political directing group anywhere which has been selected chiefly on a basis of intelligence, and there probably never can be, since in such a group other qualities, such as rapidity of decision, leadership, public spirit and a liking for responsibility, are at least equally important. If therefore propaganda is regarded as itself a final and complete activity, and not as a mere introduction to

some public manner of training people to think, the assumption of superior intelligence inevitably made by its directors must sooner or later be discovered by others to be unfounded and a sham.

Lying behind all this, however, is an even more fundamental mistake. It is that social stability depends upon uniformity of thought and action. This is a vulgar and a vital error, though it is one which politicians of all times and places seem naturally prone to make. The modern director of single Party political propaganda adopts without reserve that old slogan, propounded in this country many years ago, in a period of great social upheaval, by Edmund Burke: Ability is the enemy of Stability. Both of them mean by this, ability in the mass of the people, not in themselves. They think that intelligence, restless and widespread, means equally widespread criticism, the weakening of loyalties and accumulating tendencies to social disintegration. But the modern propagandist in public affairs is far less honest about his slogan than was Burke, who made it perfectly plain that he wanted political direction to remain in the hands of the few, and was willing and anxious that these should be selected specifically for their intelligence. The typical modern director of political propaganda has to pretend that his aim is to combine all people in a concern for public affairs, and to secure their active

co-operation. He is therefore forced to say " If we can get all people to act, think and feel alike then, and then only, will our group be stable, persistent in the face of shock, and permanent."

This contention is directly opposed to the very basis upon which the modern nation group is built. The integrity and power of every large contemporary social group are founded upon an increasing specialisation of function on the part of its members. It is true that society has got into all kinds of muddles, because it has adopted this principle of growth without any clear-sighted recognition of its implications, so that in all directions disastrous discrepancies are to be seen between actual abilities and the functions that are demanded of them. The fact remains that every step in the development of modern society demands yet finer, more informed, more balanced specialisation. That this is possible and necessary, while yet each large group is able to maintain and strengthen its own character, is due to two simple and incontrovertible psychological facts: first that human beings differ profoundly from one another in their psychological and sociological endowment, and second that these differences are complementary.

It could be urged, perhaps, that the specialisations which are the life-process of advancing civilisation all concern how people are to act and not how they

are to think. They have to do with technical skills, with industrial processes and commercial activities, and not very much with ideas, beliefs and theories. Any such division of human functions is psychologically unsound. People cannot be forever urged to increasing specialisation in certain departments of life, and kept on a dull level of uniformity in others. This is especially impossible when ideas and beliefs about political and social affairs are concerned. The specialisation of technical and industrial skills, in the long run, both push up the general standard of life and increase the general leisure. Then nothing on earth, except the sternest repressive measures—and even these for a short time only—can prevent that diversity which is the key to progress in one realm from spreading also to others.

Any form of propaganda based, as most totalitarian propaganda is, upon a contemptuous idea of the common intelligence and upon a belief in the virtues of uniformity of ideas and feeling, is doomed to ultimate collapse, for it is opposed to the most fundamental of all the characteristics of human development.

The fact that political propaganda, as it has often been shaped, aims, either wittingly or unwittingly, at producing whole nation groups in which all individuals think, act and feel alike, has profound consequences. For this aim can be realised only in

so far as the population concerned can be guarded from other influences. A successful propaganda of this type carries with it a dominant and stringent censorship. Further, since the demand is that people should adopt a uniform outlook, not for a short time only, but be fixed in it as permanently as possible, organised political propaganda must invade the proper field of education, and try to influence the young even more drastically than the middle-aged and the old.

Further, to produce the kind of uniformity required, the great bulk of the members of a group must be given an overwhelming confidence in their own social order, and far and away the easiest and most effective manner of doing this is to induce in them an antagonistically critical reaction to all other social orders. The directors of a rigid system of political propaganda do not often, save in their more incautious moments, admit that their aim is war. But the truth is that the more successful they are within their own community, the more nearly do they bring that community into the state in which war is practically inevitable.

All that has been said up to now has direct application to the greater part of political propaganda in the modern dictator State. But, for many reasons, the more democratic countries cannot afford to neglect political propaganda. The dictator State,

being organised in the main by an unbridled desire for power, will not leave the democratic countries alone, and this demands various forms of counter-propaganda. Also any world that harbours dictators is a world that hurtles from crisis to crisis, each of which necessitates rapid decisions. Most political decisions are, in the nature of the case, simply forced to rush ahead of fully considered and analysed reasons, to adopt practices in advance of anything like complete evidence. The practices, nowadays, must be given an open and public justification. Moreover the public character of most modern propaganda means that in every democratic country there will be large numbers of people who will read and hear totalitarian propaganda, for they cannot be forcibly prevented from this, as they would be in the dictator State. Some public answer must then be organised. Finally, if the concealed, but nevertheless real, trend of single Party political propaganda becomes realised and war results, for all kinds of reasons which are too obvious to need stating, all the large groups of the world that are drawn in must use methods of public propaganda.

At the same time, it is equally true to say that at present political propaganda in all the democratic countries is in a relatively backward and undeveloped state. Nobody seems yet to have decided just what it should aim at, or how it should pursue its aims.

What is a democracy? To this question all kinds of answers can be given. From the present point of view, however, one consideration overrides all others. In the modern world, political propaganda may be said to have been adopted as a weapon of State, but very nearly everywhere it has been developed as the tool of a single political party within the State. This is precisely what cannot happen, except in an incomplete way, in a democratic country. A democracy differs from every other form of government in that it must always contain at least two main political parties, each treating the other with a very considerable degree of tolerance. Although each party may develop its own political propaganda, neither can violently suppress that of the other without destroying the spirit of democracy itself.[1]

If a period of very great and general public stress should develop—and the most extreme case of this is war—the party which is temporarily in power must organise centralised propaganda, and with this, inevitably, will go a kind of official censorship, though the precise form of a censorship that is consistent with a democracy is difficult to determine. At the same time, within the centralised form of propaganda the two party voices—usually nowadays there are many more—will still be heard. There

[1] The question of propaganda for democracy, especially in war, is discussed more fully in Chapter VI.

may be complete agreement as regards the main practical issues that are at stake, but there will still be differences in the direction of approach to the settlement of these issues, and these differences must continue to be more or less freely expressed in public.

Such a state of affairs passes the comprehension of the dictator propagandist and of his satellites, and appears to them to be mere weakness. For it demands both an intelligence and a power of forbearance in the general population which they do not desire and do not believe to be possible.

When there is no great state of public stress, a democratic country will look upon all forms of public propaganda, whether political or not, as chiefly a concern of sectional interests, of particular parties, or sects, of charitable organisations, of business and commercial enterprise. Also a democracy considers it normal not to live in a state of boiling public excitement, but in a totalitarian State constant public excitement is needed to help to prevent diversity of views.

The best way of seeing what propaganda can be in a democratic State is to look briefly at the character and aims of advertising. An advertiser, if he is to be successful, must recognise very fully that many other agencies will probably set to work at the same time as himself, using exactly the same methods as his, to

induce just the same people to buy products different from those in which he is himself directly interested. Even when a virtual monopoly has been secured, the advertiser cannot go all the lengths of the single Party political propagandist, though he is likely to go as far as ever he can. He is cramped, not because his final aims are very different, but mainly because there still remain competing bodies whom he cannot crush out of existence by some method additional to that of his propaganda.

It would be extremely interesting to take the popular advertisements of twenty or thirty years ago and compare them with those of to-day. Current advertisements would probably be found to be much more dramatic, more pictorial, and more amusing, to match their wider appeal; and at the same time either more indirect, demanding for their interpretation a rather swift and alert intelligence, or, if they remain on a level of straight description, more technical, requiring a higher standard of specialised knowledge. Crude as they still are in many ways, on balance it seems certain that they are all the time becoming more intellectually interesting.

In fact, the general line of advertisement development could hardly be other than this. For what makes a man think for himself, in a critical kind of way, more than anything else, is that he should have a lot of different courses of action all thrust upon

him at the same time, or in rapid succession, each of them being persuasively presented as the best, or the most desirable, or the most reasonable. Under such circumstances no doubt he can, if he likes, and if circumstances allow, try first one course and then another in a hit-or-miss kind of way. But that takes more time than most people can spare, and for a variety of reasons is not very satisfactory. Sooner or later the ordinary person is pretty well bound to try to look fairly at the different possible lines of action and then decide for himself. In deciding he can be swayed by various influences, but he is at least on the way to thinking things out independently. Thus, people who are concerned in an advertising campaign, meant to whip up the sales of any particular product, knowing well that it is extremely likely that other people will launch an overlapping campaign to whip up the sales of a competing product of the same general type, had better reflect that this is the kind of situation that is very liable to start people thinking for themselves. The thinking may be delayed for a long time, but it will be the eventual issue. In the long run this must powerfully shape the course and the content of advertising.

Now when a democratic group establishes central propaganda for political or social purposes, the director of the propaganda has to set himself to do what the advertiser does willy-nilly. He knows that

other voices besides his own are going to be heard by the public, speaking on the same questions, but probably not exactly to the same effect. He knows that if he is going to play according to the rules of the game, in his own State he cannot put a gag upon these other mouths, or that anyhow he cannot go very far in this direction. Therefore he must so shape his propaganda that people will take it, sift it, choose for themselves to follow his line, and all the while remain as intellectually alert as they are able.

Clearly this means that the contradiction which is inherent between propaganda and education is sharpest of all in a democracy, and that the democratic director of propaganda has a singularly difficult job. Many people ignore this and yet at the same time, by becoming violently critical, exemplify it. They do not bother to think how very simple and direct the aims of political propaganda in the dictator State are—the " submission of the masses." [1] They do not consider how complex and roundabout are the methods that a democracy must use in order to achieve, at one and the same time, individual initiative and social control. Beyond doubt every style of group government that ever has been tried has its own particular excellencies and failings. One method, however, need not become a better one if it

[1] From a statement by Dr. Goebbels, German Minister of Propaganda, quoted from Albig: *Public Opinion*, p. 316.

imitates the excellencies of another; it may merely become different from what it was. Those people, for instance, who urge that England should learn from some dictator State, not only that propaganda ought to be organised, but also how it should be expressed, are not putting the case for a better or a more efficient England. They are demanding that in this respect England should simply cease to be England.

The problem must be fairly faced. Public propaganda does not change its character as it shifts its locality. Everywhere and always it is an attempt to shape common opinion, feeling and action without regard for reasons. It may itself be so devised that it becomes an effort to establish final and irresistible barriers against even the eventual emergence of reasons, in so far as these must be set before, or considered by, the common man. Or, again, it may be so directed that it becomes one of the influences which are designed to lead to the eventual emergence of reasons, available for free consideration by the greatest possible number of people, and to be used consciously for the control and direction of decisions. In the former case propaganda is an enemy of education; in the latter it becomes one of the aids to education. If propaganda breaks down in the former case—and everybody who has any belief in the inescapable onward march of the human

intelligence must be convinced that it will—it is most likely to be followed by a period of social anarchy. In the latter case it carries the seeds of its own decay, and must pass when the time has come. But it will pass easily and in an orderly manner. It is like the props and supports which the infant uses as he is learning to walk ; but then, when his muscles have grown firmer and the nervous tissues and their connexions are ready, he discards his props and goes firmly by himself where he pleases.

CHAPTER II

The Growth of Political Propaganda in the Modern World [1]

Everybody who writes a general survey of propaganda points out that it has a very long history, going far back into the ancient world. Nearly everybody also points out that science has now put so many new and powerful weapons into the hands of the propagandist that to all intents and purposes the organisation of propaganda is a new contemporary art. This is true, but its psychological implications

[1] This chapter is in no sense meant to provide an adequate detailed picture of the rise of political propaganda in modern Europe. Anyone who has read the very excellent brief accounts presented in *Propaganda and Dictatorship*, edited by Professor Harwood L. Childs (Princeton University Press, 1936), will at once realise that I owe a great debt to these. All that I have tried to do is to pick out what seem to me to be interesting leading characteristics which differentiate the political propaganda of the three main dictator States of Europe. Any readers who desire further knowledge will find an excellent bibliography in Professor William Albig's *Public Opinion* (McGraw Hill Publishing Co., London, 1939) and also a good summary discussion in Chapter XVII of that work.

are as yet but imperfectly realised by most people. Propaganda to-day may have to appeal to the same motives as have been stirred into action by the propaganda of all times and places: to pride of group or race, to the emotions and sentiments attached to potent symbols, to fear and anxiety, to the urge for dominance or submission, to greed and envy, or to what pass as legitimate social and political ambitions. In doing this it may use the age-old methods of selection and distortion of facts, of exaggerated and emphatic assertion, of constant repetition, of irony and all the other tricks and devices known to publicists of all periods. In this there is nothing new.

But the machinery used is new. The appeals to the old motives, tricked up in all the old ways, are now sent rushing round the groups to whom they are directed with lightning rapidity. They borrow the urgency of their means of travel. In the old days, when a thing happened in one place and was known only weeks or months later in another, what did it signify? The laziness of transit could be matched by an indolence of reception, and all the more so if, as was usually the case, only the few, and those the specially trained, received the news. But now, when the news comes hot-foot on the alleged happening, and comes, not to the special few but to the vast and unselected mass, its very mode of travel gives it a

clamour, and effectiveness, an emotional "tang" which the old world never knew. The ancient motives may remain. The *tempo* of their stimulation has changed, and with it also the human range of their simultaneous arousal. Let those who fall comfortably back on the reassuring dogmatism "Human nature never changes" reflect on this. If they do so they will find that not a few of their indolently cherished beliefs are in need of revision.

This also makes it legitimate to begin a brief description of the growth of propaganda from the years immediately following the last great European War of 1914-1918. Both because it was the first in the field and also because its methods have most profoundly influenced those of the other contemporary dictator States, it is best to begin with a short account of political propaganda in Soviet Russia.

What makes the story of Russian propaganda singularly interesting is that here both the circumstances and the particular ideology which it has professed have brought political propaganda into closer relationship with education than has been the case, probably, anywhere else in the world. At least it is in Russia that appeals to education have most frequently, officially and consciously been made as providing a sort of basic sanction for propaganda. When the Bolsheviks assumed power near

the end of 1917 they had to try to deal with a population of about one hundred and seventy millions of people, the vast bulk of whom were illiterate, ignorant and near destitution. It was to this depressed and hunger-stricken population that the new Party had to make its main appeal, from this to draw its chief support. Dictatorship as it undoubtedly was from the outset in its plan and policy—and it is difficult to see how any effective government in Russia at this time could have been other than a dictatorship—yet the Party could not maintain itself without a great measure of active support from the masses. The Soviet leaders quickly realised that they must work first through the literate minority. These must be set on fire by being given a mission to the rest of the people. In less than a year Lenin issued his famous edict "Concerning the mobilisation of literates and organisation of propaganda of the Soviet regime." It was the small mass of the literate, the educated, who were to hand on to the vast crowd of illiterates the new habits and the new opinions.

From the beginning the avowed motives were mixed. To make more and more people literate, to improve the standard of education in the most practical manner possible—that was one. To do this in order that the people should the more easily be able to assimilate and accept the generalisations

and opinions already settled by a political Party—that was another. Also it was speedily realised that both these aims demanded a third, a very radical economic change; for people living on the edge of destitution have no time, or energy, or will to be bothered by general ideas, even when these are handed on to them ready made. In November 1920 Lenin spoke to the All-Russian Conference of Provincial and District Education Departments—it is still education organisations that are being openly appealed to—and said, "We are not accepting the Utopian point of view that the toiling masses are ready for a socialist order. The fundamental problem for the educational workers and the Communist Party is to assist in the training and education of the toiling masses so that they may overcome old habits and old practices which have remained as an inheritance from the old order. Our main policy at the present moment must be an economic reconstitution of the State . . . and on this basis must be built all agitation and propaganda."

In one respect this particular statement is a little less than frank. It might look as if the great aim is to put the mass of the population in a position to overcome old habits and practices, at the same time leaving them the widest practical freedom of decision concerning the new habits and practices to be adopted. This was by no means the case. The

people were to be told to discard the old, they were to be put into a position to discard the old, but equally and even more emphatically they were to be told precisely what to set in its place. Very soon after Lenin made this speech, the main Political Education Committee of the Republic was constituted in order to control and direct all efforts of political propaganda and education. A year later, while Russia was still suffering horribly from civil dissension and strife, the political motive of propaganda came right out into the open. The Congress of Committees of Public Education formally declared that to make the illiterate literate was of no use in itself. The people must be led to adopt all that the Party leaders promulgated, and nothing else. From 1921 onwards to the present day this Party political motive has provided the open and primary aim of all Soviet propaganda, whether internal or external.

The methods developed have often been described and need be only briefly referred to here. The units are the " peasant reading hut " for the village, the " club " for the urban district, and the " red corner " set up in the first place in industrial establishments, in public dormitories and in isolated hamlets, often to form a basis for the formation of clubs and reading huts. It was naturally very soon found that clubs and reading huts, especially the latter, could not safely be allowed to develop as isolated units. Wherever

in the world even small groups come together they speedily stimulate cultural interests beyond the range of the particular drive which first united them. Thus it was found necessary to set up central organisations, the " houses of social culture," for instance, whose job it was to organise and direct the activities of clubs and reading huts throughout whole areas. If then the units, getting bored with nothing but straight " political education," want to extend their activities to gymnastic, or sport, to play production, or the cinema, or to anything of this kind, they must first satisfy the central authority of their area as to the legitimate connexion between these additional interests and the political education, or " political grammar," which has all the time to remain the centre of the whole system.

Here, obviously, is the censorship at work, without which no system of Party political propaganda can prevail for long. As everybody knows, it has gone to great lengths in Russia, and in certain other European countries it has become perhaps the most dominant feature of the entire propaganda movement.

As has been indicated already, the one thing that above everything else distinguishes the task of political propaganda in Russia from similar tasks when they have been tried on a large scale elsewhere, is the enormous and inert mass of illiteracy which

had to be dealt with. Every honest appraisal of Russian propaganda must admit that the Soviet Dictatorship has made valiant and persistent attempts to overcome this illiteracy. Not only has it increased very greatly the facilities for the public education of children, it has also established temporary short courses of instruction for young people and a large number of library units both fixed and travelling. It has done a considerable amount, in addition, for higher education, though perhaps with somewhat less earnestness and with an even more rigid control. But in all these developments the censorship has been at work, writing the text-books, drawing the maps, shaping the plays, directing all the entertainments and amusements, and, as always, especially in negative ways, forcibly prohibiting all books, maps, plays and amusements that it decides to be inconsistent with its own principles.

It is always a matter of singular interest to consider the particular media of propaganda that are most exploited within any particular community; for these spring to a large degree from the level of culture and the special interests which characterise that community. In particular whenever the general level of educational attainment is low, the predominant media are bound to be pictorial, dramatic, somewhat crudely symbolical, and propaganda is forced to pay much attention to popular amusements.

It is not surprising that Russia began more quickly than any other power to exploit the cinema in the interests of propaganda, that it has developed immense activity in the field of popular art, especially of picture posters, and that it began to control dramatic and musical performances at an early stage. Words, however, with their definitely analytical character, their greater detachment from the immediate and concrete situation, their tendency in expression to run towards abstract generalisations, and their more urgent demands upon an awakened understanding, reach their greatest power to persuade and influence whole masses in the same ways with the more literate type of population. Wireless propaganda has developed rather slowly in Soviet Russia, and this is not by any means wholly due to the technical difficulties. It has, however, expanded greatly and, like all the other means used for the dissemination of opinion, it is controlled in the interests of the Party. In 1936 it was estimated that thirty to forty per cent. of the broadcasts were concerned with selected news and with topics of political education, and the great bulk of the rest, though dealing ostensibly with amusement and with direct educational interests, contained features of political propaganda.

Obviously the printed word requires an even more literate population than the spoken word, if it

is to have wide influence. But the establishment of the peasant's hut and various other forms of reading centres meant that very large numbers of people who could not read themselves were more or less systematically read to. Consequently newspapers, " wall papers," periodicals and books of all kinds speedily became the objects of propagandist control. " The entire machinery of publication, scientific, literary and technical, is controlled by the State Publishing Corporation. Since the publishing of any work is dependent on this Corporation it is clear that ' nonconformist ' literature has a slight chance. This is the more important since the Corporation controls not only the publication but also the printing machinery and paper supply." [1]

Another censorship board deals with material which is to be published in periodicals and books, with general settings and stories for films, with drawings, music and maps. Everything that seeks publication in the Soviet Union, or entry from abroad, has to receive official approval. There is a large and continually increasing list of prohibited works which must not be distributed within the State.

In a number of ways the Russian censorship is more strictly administered in the rural than in the urban and city districts. For this there may be a variety of reasons. Prohibition is easier to main-

[1] Childs, *op. cit.* p. 76.

tain where the population is scattered and the educational level is particularly low. Further, when people begin to be stirred by what appear to be new movements, it is possible that the chances of original thinking, which from the point of view of a dominant political Party is likely to be subversive thinking, are greatest where the crowds are least and there are relatively few distracting interests. And again, while censorship is itself certainly negative in direction, in an unadvanced population it can very readily become a powerful positive symbol of Party or of State strength.

This leads to that feature of Soviet propaganda which has aroused the most fervent admiration in some countries and the most whole-hearted condemnation in others: its use of force. In the early days, from 1917 to 1922, when the Bolsheviks were themselves fighting for their lives, they had at least the plea that when they had resort to swift and brutal force, exercised often in an unscrupulous and underground manner, they were using only the weapons that others were employing against them. They could say also, though such an excuse is very hard to reconcile with their ideology, that they were but exploiting traditional Russian methods. But comparatively calm days came again, and still the recourse to force remained, with the secret police in entire authority over people guilty, or merely

suspected, of practices which they chose to dislike. The native and internal threats were largely removed. To take their place there must be a "spy mania," a bogey of enmity and probable invasion from the outside, for which, it must be admitted, certain outside world powers provided plenty of stimulation.

The fundamental fact remains. There is something essentially contradictory between the aims and the available methods of propaganda. It is impossible to hand on opinions, however fully formed they may already be, except to people who are at the least sufficiently mentally awake to assimilate them. The methods that have to be used in transmission are themselves exceedingly likely to stimulate a further degree of mental curiosity. People cannot be made half-awake intellectually and then kept permanently in that state, unless other forces are brought in as well as that of the propaganda itself. And so everywhere, where propaganda becomes a hardened institution, serving the interests of some single political Party, censorship and drastic persecution must be introduced to maintain, as far as possible, the state of half-literacy that is required. Doubtless it may be easier to resort to persecution and secret force in some countries than in others, but the intimate union of violent repression and political propaganda is not due mainly to the character of this

group or of that; it is due fundamentally to the nature of the human mind and the social group.

When an attempt is made to survey and assess the Bolshevik propaganda as a whole, and apart from the enormously intricate detail of its organisation, one conclusion at least seems to emerge. In the beginning there was a true educational urge mixed up with the Party demand for uniformity in ways of opinion and conduct. That aim has remained and is operating still, though it has become increasingly submerged, distorted and misdirected by Party control. If it becomes possible so to shape the world of affairs that all effective threat from without is unequivocally removed, will the educational urge in Russia grow and the mere propaganda urge diminish? None can be sure of the answer. One thing alone is certain. This is most unlikely to happen if, or as long as, Russia maintains or needs the form of a dictatorship.

In whatever group the rise of political national propaganda is studied, the same forms and characteristics recur: repression; censorship; the secret exercise of force; growing interference with education, especially early education; the use of all the modern scientific means for the transmission of views and news, and the expansion of control from the more intellectual realms to all activities of sport,

entertainment and popular amusement. But the propaganda of each nation develops its own special points of emphasis, and these merit far more study than they have been given. They show that even the most absolute types of social control are forced to take account of the persistent and outstanding qualities of the groups they try to control, and that these qualities are not readily displaced by a change from one method of government to another.

State propaganda in contemporary Italy has not even ostensibly been connected with any overmastering desire to remove illiteracy and to develop education for its own sake. It has from the beginning been wholly and solely in the interests of Party. Moreover, in many of its directions of greatest activity the control has been put specifically into the hands of individuals and not even nominally in those of a Board or a Committee. In this respect there is a marked difference in form between the Italian and the Russian models, though the difference in practice is not so great. Sometimes direct individual control is not possible, especially where heavy financial interests are involved, as in cinema or radio developments, or where the activities concerned are very predominantly social, as in Youth Organisations and the like. The single man control, however, seems always to be openly adopted if it is feasible.

The first object of Fascist Party direction was the

daily Press. Characteristically the attitude was: "Control the journalists and you will control the journals." All the more liberal and tolerant minded editors and writers disappeared from public life or were thrust into subordinate positions. As early as 1925 journalism in Italy became a more or less public profession restricted to writers whose names appeared on a register approved by the Government. But this was not enough. Even an approved writer does not always produce approved writings. The control became all the time more minute, more severe, more powerful. The Government Press Bureau began and continued to issue instructions concerning what news and what opinions must be published and what must be ignored, how much space must be given to them and whereabouts in a publication they must appear. Since 1932 every newspaper has to deposit three perfect copies of each issue with the prefect of the province in which it is published. Even the style and tone of the journalistic writing are dictated. A similar sharp dictation of foreign news and comments was established about 1927, when the Party gained control of the Stefani Agency, the chief source in Italy of dispatches from abroad.

The capture of the cinema came very early. In 1926 LUCE, ostensibly a public corporation, but actually controlled directly by Signor Mussolini, was established and given a monopoly in the official

production of films and photographs. Radio was dealt with in precisely the same manner about a year later, but has developed somewhat more slowly for the purposes of internal propaganda. External propaganda has taken on a deeper significance for Italy since the Abyssinian adventure, and under the Party control short-wave broadcasting has been developed with much vigour.

Very speedily after the "March on Rome" the Fascists turned their attention to educational policy. Their first Minister, Dr. Giovanni Gentile, introduced sweeping changes. Whenever and wherever a political Party turns a Party eye on education it practically always sees a mixture of problems. There are some genuine educational difficulties. Some system, established and conventionalised, has become outmoded and inefficient, and has ceased to stimulate the growing mind. At the same time the growing mind must not be unconditionally stimulated, or it may perhaps become dissatisfied with the Party. Thus one part of the resulting policy can be picked out and hailed as an educational reform, or another part selected and fairly labelled as sheer propaganda. The ultimate effect depends upon which of these ill-assorted trends gets the upper hand. There is no doubt about what happened in Italy. Gentile began by introducing a few very desirable changes in the general curricula

of public education. These had the effect of reducing the amount of formal and routine training, and of making the educational method more objective, more experimentally varied and more original. But it was the other, the propagandising, tendency which very quickly dominated his reforms. From the first the teachers were charged to deliver frequent and rather lengthy patriotic lessons, and these demanded a special sort of history and geography. A commission was appointed to look round for suitable text-books, but they failed to find any. In a series of enactments stretching from 1928 to 1930 a special body of Fascists were instructed to write or re-write books, and to produce all the necessary material for the elementary school which would be best calculated to train the single-minded young Fascist.

Three movements, however, stand out above all else as dominant characteristics on the positive side of internal propaganda in Italy. They are: first, the tremendous emphasis laid on Youth activities; second, the utilisation of mass public gatherings and displays in which man's efforts to overcome and control the resources of Nature are constantly depicted as a grand struggle against adversity; and third, the overwhelming encouragement given to cults of a more or less religious character and to symbols. All of these no doubt spring largely

from the Fascist leader's ardent personality and dramatising tendencies. But they could never, on this basis alone, have achieved the success and the persistent popularity that they have won among the Italian people. They call to something very deep and permanent in the group itself: the love of display; the play-acting spirit which loves pictures and symbols; the attachment to the concrete hero more than to the abstract ideal; the flair for exaggeration and a tremendously insistent public sentiment rooted in a classical past long vanished, idealised, but still regarded with veneration and thrilling with emotion. No propaganda to the Italian people which neglects these dramatic and personal interests seems likely to be very successful.

The foreign propaganda of the Italian Fascists has been of later growth and more sporadic, but it has increased rapidly in persistence and prominence. At first it consisted largely in being very "oncoming" towards certain foreign journalists, especially if they were American. At the same time news was filtered through to the Press representatives from the official Press Bureau, and dispatches were carefully studied at the Foreign Office. Ways were found to render the lot of the less complaisant alien writer a hard one. The Stefani Agency was widely used to control the foreign distribution of Italian news.

Foreign propaganda has developed rapidly since 1935 and its direction has been unified under a single official department for Press and Propaganda. Direct foreign propaganda of a public kind depends naturally to a large degree upon wireless transmission, and as all the world knows Italy has made great efforts to develop short-wave transmission, especially to the inhabitants of Northern Africa. Speaking very broadly, the main method of these broadcasts to the outside world is to endeavour to work upon some suspected or known dislike for other national groups. Most of the other great world powers have at some period or another been held up to obloquy and ridicule in the interests of Italy, but the main butt has been Communism.

One apparently small point is perhaps worth comment in view of the remarks that are often made about the relations between successful propaganda and consistency (see also pp. 120–2). It is a little strange to find that a Party which revels in telling its own school children that "a book and a rifle make a perfect Fascist"; its own agricultural workers that "a plough makes a furrow but a sword defends it"; and people in general that what is needed are "fewer conferences and more decisions, fewer resolutions and more action," has also attempted, since about the middle of 1938, to win wide foreign approval by making capital of its

leader's serious efforts in the field of international peace.

Little need be added about the negative aspects of Italian propaganda. They have been as whole-hearted in Italy as similar efforts have been elsewhere —a complete and powerful official censorship, and the exercise, through special political police and in other ways, of legalised terrorism. Italy adds further most lamentable evidence to show that without these aids political propaganda attached to single Party rule cannot achieve its ends.

In spite of all its exercise of drastic repression, however, nobody who looks at the course and content of Italian political propaganda, whether he approves or condemns its aims, will be able to withhold a certain admiration. There is in it all a spirit of daring and audacity, a brilliant inventiveness, both of phrase and of manner, a kind of realism in the midst of its most sweeping generalisations, which keep it moving and alive. It has a sort of *ad hoc* character, as if it were not wholly shackled by the chains of a closed and completed system, but can grow and fit itself to the kaleidoscopic change and the opportunities of practical affairs. The machine never seems likely to master the man who has made it.

The detailed story of the rise and swift development of State propaganda in contemporary Germany has been told often enough. Nothing is necessary

here except an attempt to pick out for some comment those features of the movement which are outstandingly characteristic of German group methods.

The one thing that must push itself upon every student is the extraordinary lack of real spontaneity in National Socialist propaganda. Elsewhere, in Russia, in Italy, the spectator, as he watches Party efforts to control public opinion and action, may blame or praise, but he cannot fail to recognise that the systems employed to some extent grow out of each fresh emergency ; to some extent they take on this character or that to deal with this or that difficulty as it is realised. The Nazi propaganda was " programmised," systematised, worked out in every minute detail as concerns all its departments, and was ready to spring into activity, as it did, as soon as ever Hitler and his group seized the power. It could be said that the Nazi Party had a fairly long period of incubation during which they fell naturally to putting schemes on paper. This is not all. It could also be said that, just as much of the dramatic quality of Italian propaganda sprang directly from the burning temperament of Signor Mussolini, so the programme character of recent German propaganda springs in part from the inordinate love of the Führer for words and sounding generalisations. This also is not all. The Germans always have loved

and admired systems, and perhaps always will. Not many people anywhere can produce the detailed and thought-out plan. So perhaps this has something to do with the extraordinary submissiveness of the German people to the somewhat rare individual who can make a system, or who can be regarded as the highest or final representative of some system already made. Such a submissiveness may be all very well in some fields, but in the realm of social affairs it may have devastating results. It may put such power into the hands of individuals, or of small groups, as hardly any man or group can assume without disaster.

Be this as it may, no sooner was Hitler in power than he had his National Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda. He had Dr. Goebbels to manage it, and he had all its generalised principles ready and all its detailed organisation drawn up. He had his thirty-one regional agencies mapped out and the work of each agency neatly carved into seven all-inclusive divisions of everyday activity. Not one branch of public or private life must escape the intrusive voice of the Nazi proclaiming all the time and everywhere that " propaganda is will to power." Elsewhere propaganda is Party method, in Germany it is Party method systematised.

The second outstanding characteristic of National Socialist propaganda in Germany is intimately con-

nected with the first. Any systematised programme of practical activities is likely to have its objectives as sharply defined as possible and its foundations cast into a form of wide generalisation. Long before he seized the power, Hitler had decided and recorded that propaganda "must perennially address the masses alone." He had also laid down his opinion of the masses: "The intelligence of the masses is small, their forgetfulness is great. Effective propaganda must be confined to a few issues which can be easily assimilated." [1] Out of this grows a mass of consciously and deliberately constructed symbolism; for the popular mind, being of a primitive intelligence, can maintain for long only that which, because it looks to be extremely simple and is undeniably symbolic, can be repeated constantly. Not only so, but symbols are conveniently concrete, so that it is admirably easy to detect omissions if anybody fails to display or to use them. Thus came the "German salute," denied to all but the "free man"; the swastika, not, however, to be shown by any but the "free man," and not by him unless he is officially German, and all manner of uniforms, badges and titles. Hitler himself must have his own title, denied by special edict to all other leaders, and he won great popular approval, after the death of

[1] A. Hitler: *Mein Kampf*. The reference in the English edition (Hurst and Blackett, London, 1939) is to p. 159.

Hindenburg, by pretending that the title of President was altogether too august for him.[1]

On the same foundation and in the same way, at least semi-conscious and deliberate, the catch-words and slogans that abound in Nazi propaganda have been constructed. How many achievements have been called "immutable," "imperishable" and "for all future time"? The slogans of to-day can pass into the slogans of to-morrow, but slogans there must be, and each in its day must be on all lips. In all this part of German propaganda not one scrap of real originality is to be found. The only thing that is different is that it is, according to the German manner, formulated, given a sweeping and dogmatic foundation, so that what grows elsewhere is "made in Germany."

The third outstanding characteristic of Nazi propaganda is its tremendous use of wireless communication. This is something more than a mere shift of

[1] After the death of Hindenburg arrangements were made to suggest that Hitler should take over the title of President of the Reich. Hitler thereupon wrote a letter to the Reich Minister of the Interior in which he said: "The greatness of the deceased has given the title of Reich President a peculiar significance. We all of us feel that this title, in its full meaning, is connected forever with the name of the great dead. I therefore ask you to provide that I shall continue to be addressed, both officially and privately, only as Leader and Reich Chancellor. This regulation shall apply to all future time." For this pretty and costless bit of self-denial Hitler received much praise.

emphasis as compared with developments elsewhere. In Germany there has been the same wholehearted and forcible effort to produce a completely single-minded popular Press, to control early education in the most drastic manner, to direct and shape all public amusements and entertainments, especially in huge mass demonstrations. In spite, however, of the very low opinion of the intelligence of the German mass population cherished and expressed by their recent leaders, the fact remains that this population, as compared with many others, is a highly literate one. Before the Nazis snatched power the Germans had already a fairly strongly entrenched culture of literature, education and amusements which could not easily be overthrown in spite of the most drastic applications of force. The radio appeals to the mentally awake, it is relatively new; it was, in Germany, already owned and run by the Postal Ministry, and the spoken word has certain advantages for people who believe, and exploit their belief, that mass forgetfulness is great. It is natural that nowhere else in the world outside of Germany has broadcasting been so fully developed for the purposes of propaganda, or so fiercely repressed. The development was necessary, because the Germans were in the main an educated people, with strong established traditions by no means all of them in line with the Party policy. These traditions

were to some extent enshrined in the other means of transmitting views and news not directly owned and shaped by the Government. Fierce repression became more and more necessary because by its nature the radio is not limited to place, and whoever listens to Berlin can, and sometimes will, unless he is prevented, turn a knob, or press a button, and listen also to London, Paris, or New York. However, by a combination of development with repression, the German wireless transmission has become, it is claimed, "the towering herald" of National Socialism. It is true that a regular part of German propaganda is to see that whenever a political leader makes a public speech he talks in superlatives—for these are believed to carry greater conviction to the popular mind than any other forms of expression; still the fact that the Party spokesmen themselves put the radio at the head of their list for popular influence is probably significant. "With the radio," said Goebbels in 1935, "we have destroyed the spirit of rebellion." [1]

This is a weapon, however, singularly difficult to control. The attempt to prevent its use for other than approved purposes has led to more and more embarrassing edicts more and more difficult to enforce, with attached penalties of an increasingly savage character. The reliance upon radio may yet

[1] Quoted from Childs, *op. cit.* p. 29.

prove to be one of the most vulnerable points in the whole method of Nazi publicity.

A fourth outstanding characteristic of National Socialist propaganda in Germany has been its attempt to influence opinion and action abroad. Germany has spent more money and taken more trouble to develop foreign propaganda than any other contemporary large social group. This is due, no doubt, to a complex set of causes : to economic position, to unbridled ambition for power, to the necessity that opinion at home and abroad should be constantly excited by ever new crises, to the inescapable tendency of those who style themselves superior to try to justify themselves in the eyes of all the world. The actual character of much of their outside propaganda will be discussed in the next two chapters. Here it is enough to point out that the more strongly a large and powerful group in the modern world claims to be self-sufficient, the more it is forced to campaign for support outside its own borders.

A survey of the recent German propaganda leaves the strong impression that it contains hardly anything that is genuinely original. All that it has done, whether on the positive or on the negative side, is derived and imitated. Only the German flair for system, formulation, theoretic tidiness, has led to crude and violent exaggerations which have been by

the Nazis, and sometimes by others, mistaken for genuine and original construction.

Although this is true, it is not the whole of the truth. German propaganda in the political field is self-conscious, it is systematised, it is worked out everywhere and at all times within the rigid framework of its very few general ideas. Yet it is also worked out with characteristic industry and attention to detail, and this often makes it appear more flexible than it really is. It is so thorough that nothing is too small to escape its notice, and nothing too great for it to attempt to do. The general ideas are as old as the hills, the applications are the Germans' own and are carried out in the German thorough fashion. Some of the applications are clever, some appear to be very devastatingly stupid; but all alike, clever and stupid, are managed with an air of colossal and immovable belief in their effectiveness.

CHAPTER III

The Methods of Political Propaganda

(1) *Some General Principles*

Propaganda is an organised and public form of the process which the psychologist calls "suggestion." It may therefore involve two very different kinds of social relationship. The first and most widely known form of suggestion is based upon a relationship of superiors and inferiors; the second upon one of friendliness or comradeship. Only the first has been studied with much care or exploited with definite intent. The reason for this is partly that suggestion has been regarded as of interest chiefly in medicine, and the relation between physician and patient, when the former is professionally treating the latter, is normally one of superior and inferior. In general, under these conditions, the former is supposed to offer opinions and the latter to accept them. Moreover this is far the easier of the two forms of suggestion to exploit artificially and of set purpose. The second form indeed, though it plays a part in the development and maintenance of public

order which is all the greater because it is usually entirely unsuspected, must grow up in a natural manner and can in no way be imposed upon people from the outside. Political propaganda, as it has been developed, is almost wholly of the first form of suggestion, and those who practise it depend essentially for their success upon some form or other of political and social prestige.

The very first thing to do, therefore, in any study of the methods of propaganda, is to look at the sources and nature of social prestige. Broadly the sources are of two kinds. They may be inherent in the persons themselves who achieve and maintain social position and power; or they may be external to the powerful persons, borrowed by them from some social institution which is already widely revered in their society, or which has already established some permanent character of unchallenged authority. In actual cases, these two sources of social prestige are usually mixed, but their character and their mode of operation remain essentially different, and sometimes one is in the ascendant, sometimes the other. It may be said at once that where the basic influence is mainly borrowed from institutions it can be very much more easily displaced.

Beyond doubt social prestige may be won by inherent qualities. It is then said that the man, or

the group, or the culture that wins it, is literally "superior" in the community concerned. Yet this notion of "superiority," whether it is applied to persons, or to groups, or to culture, is a very difficult one. It is a matter of common observation that a man is often commanding and "superior" in one society, and submissive and "inferior" in another. From a practical point of view only it is not too much to say that a person, or a group, or a culture is "superior" because he or it expresses, in some readily appreciable way, tendencies or qualities which are already widely spread in the society which yields to his or to its influence. This is the psychological truth in the common expression "Every society gets the Government which it deserves," where "deserves" does not mean anything moral, but merely that the government which wins prestige does so because it is in line with tendencies very widely spread within the group before it was itself fully established.

However, there is not much point in pursuing these considerations further, though it would be interesting to do so; for it is most clear that however people who are responsible for political propaganda in the contemporary world have achieved their prestige, not one single group of them has been able to maintain it for long without calling in extraneous aids. Also in development

extraneous and borrowed aids have been relied upon more and more, as if there is something in propaganda used for one-sided political purposes which puts those who practise it more and more out of psychological sympathy with the tendencies inherent in their own societies. What, then, are these extraneous aids and the source of their power?

The crudest and most obvious is physical force. This is bound to have a large influence everywhere, because in every society the bulk of the members must be submissive and practically all are accessible to fear. Something has been said about this already and more will be added when the effects of propaganda are discussed (see pp. 104–14). For the moment it is of greater interest to turn to the more subtly used borrowed influences. In the partially literate society of the modern world the printed word has established very nearly everywhere an institutional authority. People in general still accept without much question what they read in newspapers, articles and books. Published pictorial art—the poster, the photograph, the film—has a similar wide and for the most part unquestioned authority. What is photographed is usually accepted as "real," and the part played by modern propaganda in developing the documentary film, especially for foreign display, is considerable. The radio has quickly established itself everywhere as

possessing powerful and frequently undisputed authority. For this there are special reasons: its apparent closeness to the events reported, its impressive and little understood use of scientific apparatus, the decisiveness and "slickness" which have become the conventional modes of speech of the "announcers," and the loud-speaker mechanism which makes it accessible to a large number of people at once. In every single case where propaganda groups have maintained the necessary social prestige, they have done so very largely because they have been able to borrow from these and other established institutions an influence which, strictly speaking, belongs to the institutions and not to themselves. In precisely the same class is the extensive use made of uniforms, titles, badges, emblems, flags and all special symbols.

Yet a prestige based upon borrowing is never safe. What one can borrow so can another. The propagandist whose prestige is derived rather than inherent must try to make a "corner" in borrowing. Thus again, by yet another route, he must resort to physical force and bolster up a threatened authority by more borrowing.

Doubtless the person and group whose source of social prestige lies mainly within themselves must also use the media of Press, picture and radio when they desire to spread their influence abroad. The

difference is that what they borrow others may borrow as well, and still it will not in the end affect the issue.

There is another and perhaps an even more important consequence for methods of propaganda which follows directly from the fact that propaganda is a form of suggestion. Suggestion creates nothing, but can only arouse, combine and direct tendencies which already exist. Even in its most extreme form of hypnotism there are limits to what suggestion can do. The hypnotised person will follow no suggestion which is genuinely opposed to his character. It is easy to go too far with this principle when social affairs are being considered, for in the very large and complicated nation groups of to-day practically all the tendencies of which human beings are capable are to be found ready to spring into action in some quarter or other. A propaganda group, stirring up these, can then exalt those sections of the whole community which they have aroused into a position of authority by force, and so, for a time at least, make it appear that tendencies which are very much alive only in small sections actually sway a whole community. Not only so, but undoubtedly the continued and repeated use of suggestion gives those who exploit it a path into deeper and deeper layers of the mind or of the social structure, and in this way allows them to stir up the

more repressed and normally weaker tendencies of their victims. Most important of all, it is the usual result that when groups of tendencies, like pride, ambition, malice, envy, lust for power, cruelty, are stirred into activity, their practical combination will bring into being new tendencies, hitherto inactive and perhaps unknown, upon which propaganda can go on to operate more and more effectively. Yet with all this, both the initiation and the final issue of propaganda depend most of all upon its power to arouse into action tendencies which are there all the time in the masses to whom it is addressed.

This, more than anything else, is fundamentally what makes propaganda as an internal policy vastly easier and more effective than propaganda as a weapon for use with aliens. There is one peculiar feature about the clever and astute person with a flair for publicity which has not received very much notice. He is usually a highly suggestible person himself. He reacts with great swiftness and precision to the " hard " and " soft " spots of his own culture, which is all about him ; but just because he requires direct social contacts to do this, he may be very much less successful with any social order which is at a distance. Recent experiments in social thinking demonstrate clearly that when ordinary people are asked to pronounce about problems affecting a society removed from their own in space,

or time, or both they commonly rely upon generalisations founded upon their own immediate culture and applied uncritically to the cases given.[1] Again and again propaganda directors and groups have shown that they are not exceptional in this respect. Whether for home or for foreign consumption, all forms of public suggestion must operate first on tendencies which are there in the groups it sets out to sway, strong and ready to respond to an appropriate stimulus. In the case of home groups these tendencies can often be "intuited," responded to without analysis; but when alien societies are concerned more often than not they can be brought out only after specifically directed social and cultural analysis, and a conscious consideration of what points are likely to be highly resistant, what points will yield readily to pressure of suggestion. This means that a successful foreign propaganda must be directed—though naturally its final form need not be shaped—by the social psychologist and sociologist, or by people who, whether they call themselves by these names or not, are willing and able to adopt these points of view.

A third general matter of importance follows

[1] D. M. Carmichael: "The Co-operation of Social Groups," *Brit. Journ. Psychol.*, xxxix, pp. 206–31, 329–44. A number of unpublished researches carried out at or in connexion with the Psychological Laboratory of the University of Cambridge bear out the same points.

directly from the fact that propaganda is suggestion. Broadly speaking, suggestions may be successfully conveyed in two ways. The manner may be sharp, incisive, commanding, direct, set in terms of exaggeration and superlative; or it may be in terms of hints, soft, insinuating, subtle, disguised and indirect.. The greater the prestige, and especially the greater the "bolstered and artificial prestige," as it may be called, the more likely is the first form to be used. Also the more often the victims have been subjected to suggestion, the more likely is it that they will respond without much resistance to the commanding, brutal and authoritative style. But whenever the tendencies are deep, overlaid by others and not particularly strong; whenever prestige is not yet completely established; whenever the victims have not so far been much subjected to suggestions from the special source at work, and whenever they are psychologically "at a distance" from this source, suggestion almost always has to be conveyed indirectly, by insinuation and in disguise. Anybody who likes can see easily for himself how these principles have affected the style and methods of current political propaganda, and how, when the principles are neglected, the propaganda is of little effect.

The exploitation and development of the indirect style in public propaganda is a brilliant illustration

of how, in human affairs, methods of control which have a practical aim in view are constantly adopted long before the mechanism of their operation is understood by anybody. Fundamentally the efficacy of the indirect suggestion style depends upon the fact that in practical life different spheres of human knowledge, of conduct, and especially of feeling, are not cut off one from another. Thus meanings which ostensibly belong to one field can unreflectingly be attached to another; actions which appear right and proper in one direction can automatically be assigned the same properties when the direction is changed; and especially feelings normally excited by one set of objects or topics can subtly be induced to spread to others which by themselves would excite emotions and sentiments of a very different character.

These points can be made clear by a glance at the methods of German Nazi propaganda regularly used before the violent seizure of Austria, Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia and—though there was one political difference in this case—of Poland, and by a comparison with the methods used immediately after these countries had been seized. In each case the campaign began with an orgy of direct, commanding, brutal and decisive suggestion. The reigning influences in Austria, in Sudetenland and in Czechoslovakia were violently asserted to be

Jewish and Bolshevistic.[1] In these directions the Nazi prestige was already so strong, and the popular antagonistic tendencies among the German people so fully awake that no disguise was needed. In the case of Poland the Jews still performed the same useful function, but the position as regards Russia was already a little awkward. However, the difficulty was not tremendous, for France, and more particularly England, could very easily replace the Bolsheviks, while the suggestion method of the propaganda could still remain as direct and as drastic as ever. Austria, Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia and finally Poland were all violently seized. Then came the necessity for the use of brutal and arbitrary methods of repression which the Nazi social prestige, great as it was, could not immediately, or directly, sweep to unanimous approval. There were limits even to German submissiveness, and an appeal directly to tendencies of cruelty and arbitrary persecution, entirely successful with some sections of the population, was little likely to carry away the whole. At once therefore the indirect suggestion method was used. The emphasis in public propaganda swung over to praise of the

[1] These two were at this period always, though of course unjustly, combined in accordance with Hitler's dictum of "unify your enemies" (see also *The New Propaganda*, Amber Blanco White, London, Gollancz, 1939, pp. .

might and solidarity of the German armed forces, to the brilliance and swiftness of the victories, to the alleged impotence and lack of manliness of the foe.

After the seizure and occupation of Austria, for instance, April 9, 1938, was proclaimed as the Day of the Greater German Reich. At noon all traffic was commanded to stop throughout the whole of Greater Germany for two minutes. For two minutes, at any rate, the German citizen must contemplate the might of the Reich. Bells must ring out from all the churches. Squadrons of aeroplanes must sweep the sky above the heads of the people in populous places. Everywhere the crowds must stand, according to their orders, and give the Nazi salute. For the time, all this added to the Nazi Party a further borrowed prestige based upon a long-established military tradition.[1]

In these ways the pride and joy which attended the arousal of all the strong popular tendencies to group might and domination could be made to overspread the situations in which cruel and bullying tactics were being employed in such a manner that they could not wholly be kept secret. The psychologically important principle which underlies this

[1] For some of these details I am indebted to Dr. Otto Friedmann, a Czech citizen who was able to carry out a first-hand study of German propaganda methods to his own and neighbouring countries in the years preceding the war of 1939.

story is that feelings and attitudes that are made lively by the *elements* of one situation very rapidly spread to the *whole* of that situation, and to others with which that situation can be connected. The approval of the accepted might of the Germans was unthinkingly transferred to an approval of the plight of their victims.

Indirect suggestion looks always as if it is aiming at one thing, but its real purpose is something different. Thus all the material which it uses, whether in the form of words, or pictures, or gestures, or hints of any other kind, has a symbolic character. It is the mark of the symbol always to have at least two meanings: one of them looks to be obvious and open to everybody, but the other produces effects without ever coming out into the light. When Italian newspapers and pamphlets, in obedience to orders, decorated their front pages with pictures of a club, or a fist, or a particularly square jaw, these appeared, perhaps, as merely amusing representations of assertiveness and demand. That is what they were; but also, beneath, for the Italians, were dim memories of many provocative speeches, and a whole world of sentiment and emotion rooted in bygone military glory. When, in the middle months of 1939, the Nazi leaders once again splashed about the word *Einkreisung* in all their public speeches and writings, it had its ordinary meaning

of encirclement; but beneath, and far more potent, were the piled-up fears and resentment of earlier years. No form of public propaganda so far widely used has been able to get on without the help of popular symbols, but in single Party political propaganda symbols are apt to run riot more than in any other kind. Why is this?

It is because single Party power depends more than anything else upon whether it can persuade the bulk of the people to whom it appeals to accept very wide generalisations without criticism. The political symbol, like all other kinds, has its roots in the past. But these roots are so hidden and covered up that their actual ramifications are not seen, and their effectiveness for action appears to lie in their contribution to the growth of the present. What they produce in actual human reactions is a bumper crop of emotions and sentiments, and these make it easy for people to accept without reflection the widest generalisations.

It has been urged often that "emotions paralyse thinking." This is true only if by "thinking" is meant the critical analysis of data presented. It is not at all true if "thinking" means the uncritical acceptance of sweeping generalisations which can easily be put into words and formulas. That kind of thinking is not hindered but helped by emotions and sentiment, and just because it is that kind of thinking upon which single Party political power

depends, such power cannot grow without continual appeals to emotion and to sentiment. By far the easiest way to make this appeal is to employ indirect suggestion and to use numerous symbols.

Mass emotion cannot live on symbols alone. The main appeal of the symbol is to sentiment, and sentiments being, as the psychologists say, "organisations of emotional dispositions," they are, as it were, a kind of device of escape from the crude violence of the particular emotion. The truth appears to be that the sentiment, which grows out of a number of situations in which the same objects or ideas recur, always with an emotional setting, contributes the generalising element which the propagandist needs, and is to that extent emotion intellectualised. By itself, however, the sentiment is too steady, stable and lacking in excitement and drive for the purposes of political propaganda. So it is a part of the regular method of propaganda to use the symbol, which stirs the sentiment, always in an atmosphere of stress, strain and crisis. Then the generalisations which fit the sentiments will be met by that enthusiastic sweeping away of criticism which fits the emotion. The propagandist, especially the political propagandist, whose care is for Party alone, must live from crisis to crisis. If public excitement cools he must whip it up afresh. And since it is in the character of emotions not to last very long, the crises

of contemporary political affairs must come very frequently, with the newspapers more or less new every morning. As long as there are powerful dictators who build and maintain their power largely on political propaganda, this rush from one highly symbolised crisis to another will continue. And when an exhausted populace threatens to get more than usually tired or bored, there will always be the last and most powerful popular excitement to fall back upon—War.

These are some—though not all—of the general characteristics of propaganda method. The others are best considered by a study of specific devices adopted in one quarter or another, and by illustrations of them.

Goebbels once said: "Propaganda in itself has no fundamental method. It has only purpose—the conquest of the masses." No doubt he meant precisely what he said, but as usual he was wrong. Everywhere political propaganda goes the same way. It rests upon prestige suggestion; it assumes that the relationship of superiority-inferiority correctly represents its own relations with the people; it whips up emotion and excitement directly, by violent exaggeration and by manufactured crises; it relies upon symbol and sentiment, and in all these ways it strives continually to paralyse critical analysis and to stimulate all tendencies to thoughtless and slavish acceptance.

CHAPTER IV

The Methods of Political Propaganda

(2) *Special Tricks and Devices*

Although many of the methods which will be considered in this chapter are very persistent, and appear in most forms of political propaganda, they all have the character of special tricks or devices. They are more common in some regions than in others, or they may run riot at one time or place and then disappear for a while.

One of the most constant of these rests upon a tremendously strong belief in the virtues of sheer repetition. "The intelligence of the masses is small," declaims Hitler; "their forgetfulness is great." Nobody, perhaps, need dispute Hitler's claim to know something about forgetfulness, but the conclusion which he draws from his bit of dogmatism is both definite and sweeping: "Effective propaganda must be confined to merely a few issues which can be easily assimilated. Since the masses are slow to comprehend, they must be told the same thing a thousand times."

It is strange indeed that this exhibition of psychological dogmatism seems usually to be accepted without question as sound. There is literally no evidence worth speaking of that when intelligence is small forgetfulness is especially great, or that when intelligence is great forgetfulness is peculiarly small. What evidence there is, indeed, runs precisely the other way. As a matter of fact, forgetfulness is great in amount everywhere, whether in the masses or in the classes, or in the individual, and life certainly could not proceed at the rate at which it does unless this were the case. If people do not remember the Nazi—or any other—creed it is not because they hear it too infrequently, but either because other things interest them more, or because for some reason they do not want to remember it. And most certainly sheer repetition is no panacea for forgetting. Concerning this there is plenty of good experimental evidence and it all goes to show that repetition, in the absence of any special interest or need, is singularly ineffective. How then does repetition work in the matter of propaganda? The question is far more complicated than is generally realised, and it could be made a fruitful subject for special research, but put briefly the truth appears to be something like this.

If news and views are communicated which can be very easily assimilated, parrot-like repetition soon

tends to produce boredom, without doing anything important to improve the probability of recall. If the communication has to meet definite opposition, already strongly formed in the listeners, sheer repetition soon stirs anger or contempt, again with no positive advantages in the way of recall. Reputable eye-witnesses, for example, have constantly reported both of these effects in the case of much of the earlier Italian broadcasting to North Africa, when repetition was carried as far as even Hitler could have wished. Possibly the Nazi leaders would say that North African tribesmen have a less primitive intelligence than that of the average German citizen; but that seems unlikely. If, however, the communications are met with a certain amount of opposition and at the same time with a certain welcome, repetition, and perhaps frequent repetition, is beyond a doubt effective. Even then, however, it is not sheer repetition that is influential, but repetition with variations. What is wanted is something to break down the opposition. So far as propaganda is concerned, the requirement is to repeat with variations each time in the accompanying comment or circumstances, and each time so to shape the accompaniments that some new welcoming tendency stands a chance of being brought into play. So, gradually, the piling up of tendencies favourable to acceptance overcomes the opposition, while yet,

a certain quality of opposition being still present, the communication does not lose all interest and become a bore. The result need not be an improved memory, which in fact is not very important, but that what is transmitted goes, generally without any specific recall whatsoever, to build action, and that is the effect which is most desired.

Thus it is not parrot repetition which is of any use, but repetition with well-considered variations. This is a difference which is not without its significance for democratic propaganda, for whereas Hitler's misleading generalisation rests upon a very poor opinion of the intelligence of the masses, this one does not.

It ought to be added that there are very considerable differences between the capacities of different social groups to put up with repetition without getting either bored or angry; but there is no safe way of generalising about these: they must be studied empirically.

Another common trick is to replace all argument by statement. This has been approved in some psychological quarters. In his *Social Psychology* (1925) Professor Knight Dunlap put forward certain "rules of propaganda." The first of these ran: "Avoid arguments as a general thing. Do not admit that there is any 'other side,' and in all statements scrupulously avoid arousing reflection or

associated ideas, except those which are favourable. Reserve argument for the small class of people who depend on logical processes, or as a means of attracting the attention of those with whom you are arguing." [1] Dr. Goebbels characteristically goes beyond this, and not only agrees that argument is hopeless, but knows the exact reason. "The ordinary man," he says, "hates nothing more than two-sidedness, to be called upon to consider this as well as that. The masses think simply and primitively. They love to generalise complicated situations and from their generalisations to draw clear and uncompromising conclusions." [2] It is truly remarkable the extent to which the German National Socialist leaders foist all their own main characteristics upon "the masses."

This view, just as much as the one about popular forgetting, is pure dogmatism. It is not based upon any genuine study of any social group anywhere. It is armchair theorising. It is both wrong and right. It is wrong because it pretends that popular thinking

[1] In his revision of the earlier book, entitled *Civilised Life: The Principles and Applications of Social Psychology* (Geo. Allen and Unwin, London, 1934), Professor Dunlap repeats this rule as number two of the six Rules of Propaganda which he distinguishes. It is fair to add that his discussion of the "rule" shows him to be well aware of its limitations (pp. 352–60).

[2] Quoted from Albig, *op. cit.* p. 316.

everywhere follows the same simple course. Modes of popular thinking can often be detected in folk lore. Now the form of popular lore differs from group to group while often its content remains remarkably similar. Among some communities, or in reference to some topics, a relatively argumentative and not a very simple form is preferred.[1]

Further, a few results from recent experiments upon popular thinking appear to be unequivocal. Among these are the facts that when situations are depicted which affect groups unfamiliar, or distant in space and time, they will tend to be dealt with in terms of accepted wide generalisations about aliens which are applied immediately and unreflectingly to the case at issue. But where the situations have to do with a familiar or nearby group, they are dealt with far less often by the immediate application of a simple and sweeping generalisation, and more often by the selection of some outstanding details of the actual state of affairs depicted. The details are picked out as being of special importance or significance in the whole setting, and the conclusions are arrived at on the basis of a consideration of these. That is to say, there is some actual analysis and weighing of

[1] See, *e.g.*, F. C. Bartlett: *Psychology and Primitive Culture* (C.U. Press, 1923), pp. 92–4, and compare S. F. Nadel: "A Field Experiment in Racial Psychology," *Brit. Journ. Psychol.*, xxviii, pp. 195–211.

evidence involved, even though this may not be carried as far as an entirely impartial onlooker would think desirable.

Sometimes, then, it may be an effective rule of propaganda to refrain from argument, and at other times or places it may be equally effective to adopt argument. Only specific investigation can tell which mode is likely to have the greater influence.

This rule never to argue is really a trick concealing a trick. It pretends to be based upon a fact that there will be less popular resistance to single conclusions than to empirical analyses leading up to conclusions, or to two conclusions which do not wholly agree. And it pretends that this is because the popular intelligence is primitive. Actually the only effective reason why one-sidedness is more likely to receive popular acceptance than two-sidedness is that it is far easier to present the former in an atmosphere which makes critical dissent difficult. Goebbels, and others like him, pretend that they are working in line with the popular intelligence, and that sounds a respectable sort of thing to do. In reality, however, they are playing upon popular emotions, which is certainly a different, and it may be a less exalted operation. The simple uncompromising conclusion is just about as likely to produce popular opposition as any argument may be, unless it is swept to acceptance in some approved outburst of popular

emotion. When the propagandist says " be simple," he means " be simple if you can also be emotional." It is no wonder that an American observer of excellent standing, writing of contemporary efforts to exploit widespread prejudices, characterises Goebbels' efforts as " a triumph of baiting, communist-baiting, Jew-baiting, free-thought baiting, newspaper-baiting, sex-baiting (' let's clean up Germany ') and superior-person baiting (that above all)." [1]

This leads at once to a whole bag of tricks used by propaganda in the name of simplicity of issues, but actually all having to do with the strong arousal of popular emotions. Long ago William James said that " the descriptive psychology of the emotions is as tedious as a list of stones on a New England farm." He may have been right; nobody seems ever to have published such a list. Certainly long enumerations and descriptions of emotions are desperately unexciting. Certainly, also, the propagandist does not need a long list. About all those he needs to trouble to consider are pride and love on the positive side; hate and anger on the negative side, and fear or anxiety somewhere in the middle; pride and love in the alleged history and achievements of his own group, hate and rage for the alleged history and achievements of all or most other groups, and fear

[1] W. D. Wallas: " Some Phases in the Psychology of Prejudice," *J. of Abnorm. and Soc. Psychol.*, 24, p. 424.

or anxiety for an alleged interference by the second with the first.

Propaganda uses many tricks to stimulate widespread popular emotion, and only the more common of these can be considered. The inevitable invasion of this domain by popular symbols and catchwords has already been discussed. Much reliance also is placed upon the over-simplification of issues and the deliberate adoption of strong exaggerations. These may be emphasised, in print by the extensive use of special type-forms for headlines and paragraphing, in pictorial expression by a great amount of dramatisation, and in words particularly by the use of epithets which, within whatever culture is being aimed at, have already become highly coloured and stirring. If all these and other similar devices are put together and called exaggerations, some very pretty psychological problems arise as to why exaggerations have the great facility which they possess to arouse wide and violent emotion.

The psychology of emotion is still obscure, but it seems well established that violent emotions occur only when an action which is natural or is regarded as natural is thwarted or threatened. If a man faced by danger escapes without check, whether by flight or by fight, there is no emotion. In retrospect, when he considers how he might have been checked, there may be intense emotion, but in action there was

none. With differences for the typical circumstances characteristic of each, the same principle applies to all other outstanding emotional experiences.

It seems as if the exaggerated epithet, the over-simplified or dramatised issue, arouses emotion, not because it is uncritically accepted, but because there always hides behind it a sort of sneaking recognition that " this is a little bit too good," an attitude that would not be present at all were the case presented in more moderate terms. Usually, however, the motive is more simple and the method less subtle than this. A political propagandist wishes to stir up pride, loyalty and love for his own group or nation. He therefore spreads abroad his own version of that group's history and achievements. But he presents these achievements always with a strong suggestion, direct or indirect, that they have been won in the face of opposition. If he did not, the story might still be moderately interesting, but it would produce no strong outburst of emotional reaction. Moreover, since notions, to be of much practical effect, have to be attached to definite objects, it is not merely opposition that he suggests, but the opposition of particular groups and of particular people. There is thus always the negative factor in the arousal by propaganda of positive emotions: " See what we have done, and we could not have done this if so-and-so had not been defied."

Similarly the political propagandist wants to stir up anger, rage and hate against other groups or nations. He therefore spreads abroad his own version of the other group's history and achievements; but he presents these achievements always with the strong suggestion that they have been won at the expense, past or present, of his own group. And so there is always the positive factor in the arousal by propaganda of the negative emotions: "You must hate and destroy these groups, for they have won what we ought to have had."

As regards fear and anxiety, the position of the political propagandist is less easy. These emotions demand that some strong active tendency should be checked or at least threatened. Now it is easy enough to present group ambitions as if they are being thwarted or threatened by those of other groups. But when fear and anxiety are aroused there may be within them an uneasy suggestion that the opposing forces which are depicted to be at work may prove the stronger. Hence, while the stimulation of fear and anxiety is almost always a prominent motive in foreign propaganda, it is less safe to rely upon this motive to any extent for the purposes of internal propaganda. The initial effect of public fear may appear to be to produce greater social cohesion, but in the end it often gives rise to lowered *morale* and disintegration (see also pp. 110–1).

However, the main point at the moment is that the demand for simple issues, sweeping and one-sided generalisations, exaggerations and a complete lack of argument, compels the propagandist to live in an atmosphere of emotional excitement. Without this his simple issues excite at least as much popular criticism as any other form of statement. The paradox is that none of these apparently simple issues really is presented simply. For every positive there is a negative stated or implied, and for every negative there is a positive stated or implied.

Although this is true, yet in very nearly every department of political propaganda the negative is more emphasised than the positive side and plays a larger part. For some reason or another there does seem to be an inherent preference for the negative in social thinking. Most contemporary social groups, for example, possess a large number of newspapers, some of which have a greater circulation than others and may therefore perhaps be regarded as appealing more to very widely spread tendencies in the population concerned, and less to merely sectional interests. Now suppose any such group faces a state of social crisis, so that the bulk of its newspapers will be commenting at the same time upon the same public events. If the negative and critical newspaper comments are counted, and also the positive and constructive comments, it will be found—always

supposing, of course, that there is a free Press—that the proportion of the former to the latter is significantly greater in the more popular forms of the Press. There may doubtless be many reasons for this, some of which will be due to the particular circumstances of the occasion, and some of which are of general applicability. Many people point out that it is easier to disprove a positive than a negative statement, but it looks as if it ought to be just as easy to object to a negative as to a positive. Apparently it is not. Positive comments upon political problems mean either that some constructive scheme must be accepted, or that some alternative construction must be achieved; but negative comments—in a free country—may mean nothing at all except that some authority is rejected or opposed. Very likely positive and constructive thinking demand greater isolation from the social group than most highly socialised individuals can manage. In addition the negative criticism, being mainly merely taken as a hit at some constituted authority, may, where liberty of outlook is encouraged, be regarded chiefly as a bit of fun, with a lot of obscure motives in the background connected with antagonism to established forms of control. However this may be, every known form of political propaganda makes much of negative criticism and of antagonisms, and if these are not permitted as concerns internal

authority they are all the more rampant where the authority of other groups comes into the picture. It looks as if successful propaganda must, for a long time to come, contain this strong element of negative criticism.

This directly raises an issue much debated in private but so far given comparatively little definite public consideration. Is it possible for an effective propaganda merely to campaign for a *status quo ante*, for the maintenance of affairs as they are, or as they were when the need for propaganda arose? Political propaganda always makes great capital out of some threatened disturbance to the integrity of a group supposed to originate outside that group. In this way it may appear that such propaganda is in the interests of group maintenance, and is designed to help to keep the group just as it is, and free from interference from without. But of course the question is less simple than this. The plea of outside threat is resorted to only when the group is itself undergoing some stirring internal change. Although it may seem as if all that is sought is that the group should be left alone, the real aim is to organise the enthusiastic elements of the group in support of the current direction of internal development.

As it happens, there is a good illustration of the difficulties of propaganda for a *status quo* in Europe

during the years following the War of 1914–18. There never was any really well-organised and directed political propaganda in favour of the League of Nations; but, especially in the early years, leading statesmen in most of the countries of the world made speeches intended to arouse popular enthusiasm for this new political organisation. The speeches were widely reported and circulated and, so long as it appeared that the League was something new and revolutionary in public control, they won a considerable amount of decided popular approval. As time went on, and it became more and more clear that the League was not being designed or organised to achieve anything radically new, especially as it became a happy hunting ground for legal minds with their constant appeal to precedent and their assumption that what was, or is, is good, popular support declined. From time to time the propaganda speech was still heard and, though without very expert direction, other methods of advertising the merits of the League were tried, but it was all of very little use. Even those who still remained adherents became rather tepid, academic, approving intellectually, but without much practical liveliness.

It would be folly to maintain that the attachment of the League of Nations to a somewhat lifeless conception of an existing and static social order was the sole cause of its lack of success. It was a contributory

reason. The truth is that no propaganda is likely to be successful for long which does not appear to throw down a challenge to an existing order. If the League of Nations is revived, or if some other organisation with a different name takes over the functions formerly assigned to it, precisely the same history will be repeated, unless it can be designed to deal with a world in rapid change.

What about counter-propaganda? Here the position is undoubtedly different. Once an influential group has flung down a challenge based upon its own effort to effect some great internal reorganisation, and once it has reinforced this challenge by propaganda resting on charges of external opposition, it is easily possible for other groups, by counter-propaganda, to whip up much public excitement, emotion and approval, even though they appear to seek no change for themselves. At the same time this is only emergency publicity, suitable and effective as a counter-measure solely in a state of public stress. Should the state of emergency last a long time, any counter-propaganda which continues to harp on the desirability of keeping an existing social *régime* unaltered will decline in popular effectiveness and appeal.

Here is the place to consider a curious feature of political propaganda which has been much forced upon public attention during the last few years,

especially by Germany. This is the method of the *barrage*. For a short period—a week, a fortnight, a month—all the publicists are ordered to aim all their propaganda at one objective. This may be a prelude to violent adventure, as in the cases of Austria, Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia and Poland. But it need not be, for, both before and after these hazards, German propaganda adopted the same methods of the temporary exaltation of some primary enemy. The antagonist could be Russia, or France, or England, or some member of the block of the smaller neutrals; it could be some special department of organisation in any of these places, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, colonial and economic administration, the Trade Unions; it could be some outstanding leader in this group or in that. Always the hate and the compensating pride and loyalty were to be as concentrated as possible.

In this there is nothing new. It is the political imitation of the long-established advertising campaign.

Why should such a method be adopted? The chief reason is psychological. The more emotional propaganda is, the more frequently must its objects be changed. Human emotions are sporadic. They flare out and disappear. They are, as a French writer has said, "incidents in the life of feeling." They may last longer in their social than in their

individual expression, but they cannot last very long. Maintained in an extreme form they pass easily into satiety, which is like an advanced stage of boredom and must, in general, be avoided by the propagandist at all costs. Only a propaganda designed to secure intelligent, cool and clear-eyed acceptance—if this is possible—can afford to pursue the same objectives, at the same pitch, for long periods at a time.

Barrage, as regards this emotional significance, is half sheer trick and half very good social psychology. As trick it maintains emotions merely by changing objectives. But there are limits to the possible extension of this, and if this were all the device would ultimately defeat itself.

Its real danger, from the point of view of other groups in society, is that by attaching the emotions aroused to different objects in succession, it may succeed in building up strong sentiments which can hardly be displaced. Usually it is assumed that the sentiment is built by attaching different emotions to the same object, but it can just as well be developed by attaching the same emotions to different objects. The emotion of rage against the particular objective becomes a sentiment of hatred against all, or nearly all, outside powers; and since, as has been said, all emotions have a double-barrelled character, it may also become a sentiment of overbearing pride in the superiority of one's own group.

Consideration of the method of *barrage* raises another point of vital importance. Apologists and critics of propaganda both tend to speak much about consistency. Right and wrong, good and bad, truth and lies do not matter, but consistency everybody believes to be necessary. The current practice of political propaganda suggests very strongly that the only kind of consistency that is really considered important is consistency within a single time and topic. Here, in another way, Herr Hitler's contemptuous " the forgetfulness of the masses " comes in again. Space out inconsistencies sufficiently and they will escape notice. This of course is to admit that after all " the masses " must be helped to forget. Provided times and themes are kept sufficiently distinct, what is said at one time and about one topic may be as inconsistent as anybody pleases with what is said at another time or about another topic, and it is thought that no particular disadvantage will be suffered.

An extreme instance is perhaps best. When, in January 1940, the German battleship, the *Graf von Spee*, was battered and beaten in the engagement of the River Plate, the German wireless loudly proclaimed a great German victory. Within a day or two they were caught in their own trap. The rapidity of events made their problem singularly difficult and they were forced to attempt a few un-

happy corrections. In the main, however, their chief effort was to change the topic and to proclaim alleged losses of the British Air Force in contemporary engagements over the North Sea, and the alleged impotence of the British Navy in home waters. Within what limits, if at all, this trick was effective with their own people it is not possible to say at present, but it was an application of one of the principles of the *barrage*: "Change the topic and you can change the tune."

In fact this is a most dangerous principle, not because literal consistency over a wide range is terrifically highly valued by most men of affairs—who know well enough that action must match circumstance and that circumstances have a way of changing swiftly—but because it offers the easiest of all targets to counter-propaganda. Political propaganda is public. What is public can be recorded and nowadays usually will be, and seasons and topics which were sharply divided can, by an opponent, be brought together again. Then the inconsistent publicist can be charged with lack of responsibility and a mean intelligence.

Such evidence as there is for the view that consistency is of direct and primary importance in propaganda will be considered later, when an attempt is being made to estimate the effects of propaganda (see pp. 120–2).

The next device that must be considered is the use of humour, particularly in the forms of irony and sarcasm. Scarcely any political publicist seems able to refrain from using these weapons. They may, if he is clever enough, be very effective within his own population, but for outside propaganda they are the most difficult and dangerous of all devices. There is almost no reaction which differs so much from one social group to another as accepted and effective forms of humour. Not only must the culture, practices and atmosphere of a group be known extremely well and intimately if a prevailing sense of humour is to be touched, but they must be known sympathetically. If these conditions are not secured the publicist had better keep off attempts to "be funny" as earnestly as he would guard himself from some horrid disease. More than this, since very few people indeed can accurately assess their own capabilities in the way of humour, the propagandist had far better seek the opinion of an instructed and candid friend, if he has one, concerning this than rely upon his own opinion.

The perfectly amazing use which certain propagandists constantly make of irony and sarcasm for foreign consumption, must somehow be connected with that superiority which, as has already been pointed out, they assign to themselves and deny to their audience. Very few people anywhere really

relish the efforts of aliens to make their own native group look ridiculous. They may rather like to make such efforts themselves, and they may accept them from their fellow members, but they are apt to resent them from foreigners. The arch-propagandist of Germany, Reich Minister Dr. Goebbels, has shown himself to be particularly partial to this line of approach. On July 14, 1939, for example, he published in *Volkischer Beobachter* a public reply to certain pamphlets which Stephen King-Hall had caused to be circulated in Germany. Apparently he considered this reply to be highly successful and, since much of the German propaganda is dominated by the simple belief that what is "good" in Germany must be equally "good" elsewhere, he got it translated and very widely distributed in this country. It consisted of eight pages of elaborate sarcasm broken by sudden incongruous descents into what must have been taken to be contemporary popular English idiom. It culminated in this:

"Your English propaganda tricks are absurd. There was a time when we National Socialists possessed no power, and yet we were able to overcome our political opponents at home. That trained us in the work of propaganda. From 1914 to 1918 you were dealing with a nation that was practically unprepared. The position to-day is different. We are now a politically-minded nation and we know

what is at stake. Tomfoolery such as that contained in your letter can no longer bamboozle us. You can tell those little tales to the marines, you honest old British Jack-Tar."

The pamphlet was sent by post to a great many English people and was read by some of them at least. So far as can be found it produced a lot of more or less mild resentment in some quarters, a lot of mild amusement in all quarters, and no lasting effect whatsoever. Unless the issue is really sharp and the irony savage, in which case resentment is likely to be deep and antagonism heartened, this is the usual effect of sarcasm addressed by a member of one social group to the members of others.

Suppose, however, that a publicist contrives to make *himself* appear habitually rather ridiculous, while yet he is clever enough to direct occasional factual and non-ironical propaganda to his foreign audience, the position then may be a different one. For a man who makes himself somewhat, but not overpoweringly, ridiculous in a community may, in certain groups, come to be regarded with a kind of tolerant feeling akin to affection. This may win for his serious remarks a less critical reception than he would otherwise get. But it is a very difficult game to play on purpose.

Yet another trick, exploited in the interests of propaganda at all times and in all places, is the

deliberate starting of rumour, the "whisper" campaign. "The transmission of news from mouth to mouth is the best," said Ludendorff, "because it is the most dangerous means of propaganda. The idea is planted and no man knows whence it came." This is, in fact, a particular form of prestige suggestion, because although no man knows from whom the ideas transmitted first came, he nearly always feels impelled to treat them as coming from a very important and powerful source. Indeed the organisers of a "whispering" campaign take care deliberately to encourage this suggestion, and can rely fairly safely on its becoming more and more definite in the course of popular transmission.

No other organised political propaganda of modern times has been as active in the deliberate dissemination of rumour as the German. The whisper campaign has played its part in every preparation for violent action on their part, and it has been especially employed, apart from violent action, wherever there are a number of groups or parties closely in contact but nevertheless in traditional disagreement. It is a very favourite method, for example in the Balkan States. The cafés of Budapest offer engaging opportunities to any organisation whose job it is to furnish the gossipers with new rumours. Many of these rumours, started in recent years by German agency, are obviously meant to

feed existing group rivalries. In 1939, for instance, it was widely reported in the Balkans that a certain Macedonian terrorist organisation was getting, or was about to get, German assistance. The story was designed to feed the flames of discontent between Bulgaria and Jugo-Slavia. It came from German sources.

In other cases the effort is to drive a wedge between threatened friendships. More or less suddenly, for instance, in 1939, many people in Roumania were found to be asking why Britain swindled some Roumanian company or other in a former trade deal.

About the same time a British military mission went to Angora. Before long it was widely rumoured that news had leaked out from the German Legation in Sofia that Herr von Papen was making a confidential report to the German Chancellor on the activities of this mission. He would, it was said, make it clear that the mission was responsible for Turkey's mobilisation of considerable military forces in Thrace. Actually the mobilisation was complete long before the British mission had arrived, but the ordinary man did not know of this, and could have no easy or reliable means of finding out.

In fact a popular rumour, to be effective, must have a certain trapping of detail to give it apparent

development of propaganda is partially due to a spread of popular education, and popular education everywhere is heavily weighted in favour of the use of words and of numbers. Yet comparatively few people are given much genuine facility in the management of numbers, and fewer still are afforded any opportunity to understand critically the use of even the simplest kinds of statistical measurements. When a statement is "quantified" it seems to carry, to the majority of persons, a superior certainty, and it passes without question. This may be due partly to inadequate training or endowment, and partly to the invasion of popular life by science, which likes to get everything into a mathematical or numerical form. Anyhow the fact is certain enough. "Quantifications," says Albig, "are increasingly used, as general publics are even less competent in analysing statistics than in winnowing out facts from verbal presentations. Yet there is a widespread faith that figures do not lie. In the national campaign of 1936, the Republican Party [of America] used appeals by figures more extensively than had been true in the publicity of any preceding campaign. Such simplifications are frequently fatal to impartial consideration, but are usually useful in the dissemination of conclusions." [1] A similar development can be observed in attempts to control opinion all over the civilised

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 319.

world. It is another bit of evidence, if any were needed, to show that more education is required to destroy what a little education has helped to build.

Last of all, something must be said about that device which has given rise to more hot dispute than almost anything else in political propaganda—the lie. "Almost invariably the propagandist becomes a liar. He not only distorts; he also fabricates. He is usually driven by the logic of events to more and more extreme falsehoods." [1] The greater the state of public tension, the greater appears to be the opportunity to profit from the undetected lie, or even, perhaps, to reap advantage from the story which large numbers of people suspect, though few know, to be untrue. "When war is declared," runs the saying, "Truth is the first casualty."

The propagandist's disregard for the truth has given rise to a vast amount of casuistry. The ancient creed that if an action can be regarded as good, from the point of view of its efficiency in the pursuit of some desired end, any statement whatever which leads the masses to undertake that action is right, has been revived in its most extreme form. "The mere fact that a propaganda item is untrue could never be an obstacle to its uses, for 'right is what is useful for the people,' people being here

[1] Albig, *op. cit.* p. 313.

identical with the Party." [1] "Only those methods," says Hitler, "are good and beautiful which help towards securing the dignity and freedom of the nation," [2] and again the only arbiter of national dignity and freedom is the Party.

The other side of the controversy has been expressed very clearly by Brigadier A. L. Pemberton in a most excellent paper entitled *Propaganda: Its Theory and Practice*. Pemberton states a number of practical rules which he considers that successful propaganda must observe. Among these is one which runs: "Truthfulness is essential." He says: "The reason for this does not lie in any moral obligation, but in the simple fact that truth will out, and that a lie once revealed will reduce the effectiveness of all subsequent propaganda." [3]

The difference clearly is not ethical, but strictly psychological. Hitler and his associates have their eyes always and only on the immediate future, and for the rest they rely on their belief in "the forgetfulness of the masses." Pemberton, however, looks further ahead, knows well that nowadays there are many aids to memory, and has a stronger belief in the effect upon human behaviour of detected lies.

[1] *The Times* newspaper, December 9, 1939, "The Heritage of Goebbels."

[2] *Mein Kampf*, English edition, p. 158.

[3] *United Services Institution Journal*, 1939.

Yet, since many people who disapprove of it still think that lying is an inescapable part of the art of propaganda,[1] and since it is certainly true that lies have been discovered and exposed in practically all organised political propaganda that has been carefully analysed, the matter merits closer study.

Selection, for the purposes of a popular story, is inevitable, and selection may be one of the forms of distortion. Even a scientist, who is of all men supposed to pursue truth alone, when he describes his experiments and their results, selects. Much detail actually escapes his observation, much more is irrelevant to the issues, and more still simply cannot be reported for lack of time and space. In social affairs, with their overpoweringly greater mass of detail, selection is yet more unavoidable. Unwitting selection nobody can escape, and many a man, under the stress of very strong needs or desires, or beliefs, selects unwittingly, failing entirely to pay any attention to details which affect an issue, and so misleading himself and others. Objectively this is lying, though subjectively it is not. Pemberton would say that it produces bad propaganda and that, contrary to the German view, the propagandist ought not to cherish any more violent passions about his material than he can help.

Wilful selection, however, may be of two kinds.

[1] See further discussion in A. B. White, *op. cit.* p. 47.

It may merely operate on details that make no difference that can be appreciated to the issue. Then the event in which the details culminate is correctly reported and all is well. Or it may suppress or distort details known to make a difference to the issue, and then the event is incorrectly reported and there is a lie in intention as well as in fact.

It is clear that wilful suppression, distortion and fabrication are no more absolutely necessary for the propagandist than they are for anybody else. In these respects there is no truth in the statement that he *must* lie ; though probably, as things now are, the chances are that he will.

Ought he to lie ? If this problem is regarded as purely psychological, the correct way to put it is this : What sorts of results are lies in propaganda likely to produce ? If they will produce the results that their author wants, and especially if they will produce these results more quickly, or with more lasting effect, than can be achieved in any other way, psychologically speaking the propagandist ought to lie. But when he realises this even the most hardened liar, even Hitler, is in another difficulty. He has to try to guess whether a lie is likely to be found out by other people or not. If it is found out it will most surely, as Pemberton says, discredit future propaganda from the same source to some extent. When that happens the propa-

gandist has, from his particular point of view, been simply stupid, which is just the same thing, from other points of view, as being immoral.

On January 27, 1940, the British First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Winston Churchill, made a public speech at a mass meeting at Manchester. The speech was broadcast while it was being delivered, and the broadcast was heard by millions of listeners in England and also in the United States of America. There was a small amount of disturbance in the meeting, but the proceedings were not seriously interrupted and the speech was brought to a triumphant and highly successful conclusion without any curtailment whatsoever. A day or two later a special German version of this event was broadcast to America, together with comments which depicted the meeting as wrecked by dissension, confusion, interruption and riot. This was a particularly unintelligent lie, of which Hitler, unless he had "forgotten," must surely have disapproved.

There is only one argument that can be used by the propagandist in favour of lies which are likely to be speedily and widely detected. The passionate political publicist is speaking to people who are mainly of like passions with himself, though with less knowledge. "It is all right with my own people," he will say, "because their passions will make them accept my reports for as long as matters

and violently reject all denials. And it is all right with other people because some of them can always be reckoned as having the same passions, and denials will only make them believe all the more firmly what I tell them. So the nett result is increased unanimity among my own people and increased dissension among others, and that is just what I want." There is something in this argument, so far as internal propaganda goes, and provided that the publicity is supplemented by a complete and repressive censorship. There is very little in it indeed as regards external propaganda. Relatively few far-away folk will nowadays have sufficient passion to go on believing a lie when obvious factual evidence contradicts it. Even for the dictator State to spread abroad a lie that can easily and decisively be rebutted is an unintelligent stratgical error in foreign propaganda. Everywhere else in the world, for the same reasons, it is an error in all political publicity.

But what of the lie that is so cleverly framed that it cannot receive a factual disproof? Here the propagandist who cares nothing for truth as such generally feels himself on safer ground. "For," says he, "a lie that goes undetected acts in just the same way as the truth." It is to be noted that this is not something which he has demonstrated; it is merely his belief and, like most beliefs, it is cherished with a confidence that has very little to

do with any examination of facts. It is possible, after all, that the belief may not only be indecent, as most folks fortunately hold, it may literally be unfounded.

There is at least one consideration which should make this kind of propagandist pause. A lie which goes forever undetected may perhaps act like the truth; a lie that goes undetected for a long time may possibly act as nearly like the truth as serves the purposes of the political propagandist who lives from hand to mouth; but a lie which is publicly countered at once, even though the counter-evidence does not go all the way to proof, cannot act like the truth. There will be wide doubt, indecision, suspense while more evidence is being sought.

The chances of swift public rejoinder become greater every year. The old saying "ill news flies apace," now has to be amended to "all news flies apace." Assertion and counter-assertion jostle one another all round the world. It is psychologically safe to assert that the most probable effect of a lying propaganda is a wider and wider disbelief in propaganda, so that what some publicists regard as their most astute trick of all, in the end deceives themselves only.

There is an excellent story of two clever business rivals who met on a Continental railway train. "After some chatter in which each attempted to learn

the destination of the other, one volunteered the information that he was going to Vienna. The other eyed him suspiciously. 'Now why do you not tell me the truth?' he asked. 'You know you tell me you are going to Vienna, so that I will think you are going to Cracow, when you know very well that you are really going to Vienna. Why do you lie to me?'"[1]

To such a state of mind, it may be, the political propaganda of dictator States and single Party is leading people everywhere. Can the publicity of a democracy avoid a similar fate? This question will be discussed later (see Ch. VI).

Political propaganda, as it has been developed of recent years, is a sackful of tricks, and the most prominent political propagandists have been national and international mountebanks. Their methods, whether general or particular, have been designed, like those of mental conjurors, to delude intelligence. People who know that they are being tricked may still rather like to go on being tricked so long as it is only a matter of amusement. The wizard and the witch-doctor of the primitive group held the issues of life and death, but their modern counterparts generally hold only the light-hearted attention of the music-hall audience. It may be that political propagandists, like other politicians, will go on

[1] Quoted from Albig, p. 310.

swinging from one extreme to another, the one set treating man as but little lower than the angels and the other as but little higher than the devils. Both are wrong. He who despises and underrates human instincts and emotions will be ineffective. It is equally true that he who despises and underrates human intelligence will himself, with greater certainty year by year, be despised.

CHAPTER V

The Effects of Political Propaganda

Let it be admitted at once that no genuinely controlled evidence as to the effects of political propaganda is at present available. Such evidence in any case must be extremely difficult to secure, for in every instance of its use propaganda is one only of numerous agencies working towards the same ends.

It is often strongly urged that the most effective propaganda demands a strict censorship and that behind the censorship must stand a threat of severe punishment if the restrictions are not fully observed. For this view two kinds of reasons are given. It is said that even the most furious propaganda which has not been able to establish a censorship has been a relative failure whenever it has been used for political purposes. For example, "the utilities propagandists of the late 1920's [in the U.S.A.] were largely unsuccessful because they could not control all the channels of communication."[1] It is also

[1] Albig, *op. cit.* p. 313.

asserted that in every case where Party political propaganda seems to have been highly successful, censorship and the sanction of force have been used ruthlessly.

These reasons are certainly not conclusive. The first ignores differences of place and of culture, and the second may possibly, though this is perhaps unlikely, be mistaking an effect for a cause. Yet in view of the common belief that propaganda demands the aid of hard and extensive penalties, it seems strange that nearly everybody who has written about the effects of propaganda during the War of 1914–18 insists that the Allied publicity was very much more successful than the German. The former involved no very rigid use of a censorship, and none at all of brute force. German writers have, no doubt naturally, gone farther in the direction of deriding their own early propaganda than any others, and Hitler himself has gone farthest of all. He has stated repeatedly and emphatically that Allied propaganda, and especially English propaganda, was a work of genius, while German propaganda descended to the lowest depths of imbecility.[1]

However, it is assuredly a gross misstatement to

[1] For instance, he says that in Germany the attitude was that " the work of propaganda could be entrusted to the first ass that came along braying of his own special talents." *Mein Kampf*, English edition, p. 160.

say that political propaganda won that war, and had the issue been different, it looks as if it would have been just about as easy to maintain that the Allied propaganda was inefficient and the German all-conquering.

It seems reasonable to conclude that if a single political Party gains control of propaganda, and if, as is usually the case, it is interested immediately in a short-term policy only, the Party will find it necessary to supplement propaganda proper by a strict censorship, and to maintain this by force and threat. The social psychological mechanism involved is simple. First the Party appeals to motives that are already strong in certain sections of its community. It thus secures intense sectional enthusiasm and emotion. Then the Party puts those sections into a position of power authority over the rest. This further enhances the enthusiasm of the sections, and they see to it that the others are frightened to disagree with that which, if they were left alone, they would not accept readily. It is then hoped that if the fear can be kept effective long enough the few inveterate dissentients will be killed or otherwise got rid of, and other people will be overpowered by mere habit, so that what at first they would reject if they were not frightened, they come soon to accept in a conventional way.

Occasionally a generalisation is met with which

at first sight looks to be the exact opposite to the one which has just been considered. This is to the effect that propaganda is the more effective the more free it is. Usually the argument takes the form of a claim that commercial advertising has influenced public opinion and action far more extensively than political, ethical or religious propaganda.[1] There is no evidence to speak of, but it very soon appears that these two generalisations do not really contradict each other. It is asserted that the political propagandist is always raising an issue which people must treat as serious, while the advertiser is merely concerned with some superficial choice. It does not desperately matter to the consumer which of half a dozen brands of soap, all of much the same price, he buys; but whether a man accepts one system of government or another does matter tremendously. Hence it could be perfectly true that the political propagandist is effective only in proportion as he uses force and repression, and also true that his effectiveness still remains less than that of the advertiser who uses no force and no repression whatever.

If any powerful Party in a State has recourse to force and fear in spreading about its propaganda, it does so mainly in order to produce wide conformity with its decrees. An emotion, however, never

[1] See, *e.g.*, Aldous Huxley: *Harper's*, vol. 174, p. 32.

universally or for long produces only a single kind of effect. In this case people who are afraid of the things which they are being asked to accept are to be coerced by outside authority. They may, however, be even more afraid of the innovations than they are of the authority from whom they are required to accept them. Then, conformity being for the Party a matter of external behaviour, but for the people a matter of internal attitude, the most likely thing to happen is that the prohibited actions, ideas and feelings are driven underground and there flourish exceedingly. To tell what sorts of things are going to be affected in this way is a difficult task, involving both knowledge and insight. They differ greatly from group to group.

There are classes, however. In the primitive community it is more than likely that magical and religious practices and beliefs which are directly and forcibly banned will continue in secret. In the more developed group it is exceedingly likely that well-established political, and particularly scientific, practices will go on, though to the onlooker they may seem to have disappeared completely. Most important of all, everywhere and in all cultures, if there are any estabiished details of social practice which in their nature make for expanding contacts, these will be singularly difficult to restrict by force to some single direction of expression. It was said

at the beginning of this book—and illustrations of it have been given again and again in its course—that nearly all the means that are available for propaganda, if it is to reach its objectives, have this character of being inherently favourable to wider and wider social contacts. They are of all things in the modern group the most difficult to control fully merely by fear.

Here again it is important to remember that a single emotion is rarely stimulated in a single person and almost never in a whole group of people at once. For example, an institution like the radio may be made a matter for sweeping prohibitions, and the prohibitions may be enforced by appeal to fear. But in every modern community there are bound to be many people, and many groups of people, whose curiosity is particularly stimulated by all the means that are now available for linking one group or nation with another, and for extending the range of social contact. They want to learn how the inventions that stimulate social contacts work, and to follow up their developments as they become more and more widely used. Hence the very thing which has been artificially surrounded by fear naturally also stimulates curiosity. Now the typical curiosity reaction is to explore the stimuli and situations that evoke it. The typical fear reaction is to run away, or somehow to escape, from the stimuli and situations

that evoke it. Nobody can do both at once. If both are simultaneously roused one must sweep the other away; or each must be held in suspense, and there will be alternation from one to the other, with no decisive action; or they must combine. When they combine the spirit of adventure is born. The adventurer is not oblivious to fear, but guards reasonably against it, reckoning little of situations which have no flavour of danger. His curiosity does not find expression in mere recklessness, but in a prudent and guarded exploration. If then some strong social authority strives to invest practices that rouse great public interest and curiosity with fear, by prohibiting wholly and forcibly some feature of these practices, in many cases what the authority really does is to awaken the sense of adventure. The authority must then either direct this into other channels, which is not as easy as it looks, or be itself in danger of being beaten by it.

Suppose nothing of this kind happens. Suppose the community is one in which even a rather small appeal to fear sweeps all resistance away. Then it is a community in which public morale is already low. For morale depends more than anything else upon a lively and not too serious spirit of adventure which meets emergencies clear-eyed and calmly, from internal resources, and is equally capable of carrying on satisfactorily during those periods when emerg-

encies are not pressing. In other cases if, in order to arouse a fear that sweeps everything else away, producing only slavish conformity, the external penalties attached to disobedience are made increasingly severe, the group is being swung towards panic, its morale is being lowered and it is being made more sensitive to danger from all sources.

At the same time, political propaganda that is violently enforced may undoubtedly produce an appearance of immediate and widespread conformity. Then the things that are done or not done, mainly because people are afraid, owing to the very great sway of routine in social affairs, may speedily come, in many cases, to be done in an unreflecting manner and because they are regarded as conventional. It is a risky thing to guess precisely what practices will be affected in this manner, and within what limits of time.

On balance it is safe to conclude that while the use of violence as a sanction for propaganda may in some instances produce apparent wide conformity, actually such conformity is always less than appears. The remote effects of the policy are still more likely to lead to difficulties, and since the fear motive normally requires stronger and stronger penalties if it is to be persistently kept alive, there is a real danger of lowered public morale.

Those who believe that violence and threat are

powerful agencies directly increasing the efficiency of political propaganda strangely neglect one fact. The Party that threatens also promises. The Russian peasant may listen perforce to more "political grammar" than he likes, but also he is promised prosperity and better houses. The Italian colonist may be made by force to accept hardships and restrictions against which, without attached threats, he would rebel, but at the same time he is promised a competence and freer conditions of life at the end of a period usually not very definitely specified. All the single Party European powers have had their Four- and Five-year plans. Even a promise of something the realisation of which may be lost in the mists of the future may apparently be effective. "You must remain hard," said the German Labour Minister to his audience in German occupied Poland in 1940, "and then the wish of the Führer will come true and in fifty years this will be a flourishing German farmland in which there will not be a single Pole or Jew." [1] Ideas and practices may be forced into immediate acceptance by fear. They cannot be maintained in acceptance by fear alone.

It may be that the fear aroused is not fear of the propagandist, or of his Party, but fear of some enemy named or implied by the propaganda. Then the object may be either to stiffen opposition within the

[1] *The Times* newspaper, London, February 14, 1940.

propagandist's own group to the enemy named, or to stimulate antagonism to this enemy in alien groups. For both these objects the appeal to fear of a possible or actual foe has been made use of in every scheme of political propaganda that has ever been launched.

It is very commonly believed that fear of external aggression is sufficient to bring a group into closer and stronger cohesion. Mere fear of aggression does not do this. It produces only the huddled and cowering horde which is extremely likely to stampede or to scatter at the least opportunity. Fear promotes cohesion only if it is combined with a conviction that the threatening aggressor can, or at least ought to be resisted. Consequently if the aim is to develop unified group resistance against an outside threat, it is psychologically a very risky matter to appeal chiefly to the fear motive, whether such appeal is made for the purposes of internal or of foreign propaganda.

When foreign propaganda only is concerned, there are instances in which the predominant object is the direct demoralisation of an enemy. Then fear may often successfully be invoked, and will be the more effective the less it is mingled with any other emotion. Nevertheless this also has its difficulties. It has already been pointed out that fear can be aroused only when other tendencies are being thwarted, or hindered, or threatened. It may therefore be the case, unless the field is chosen with the greatest care

and with genuine insight, that when fear is stimulated it may still be these other tendencies which take charge and dominate action. Contemporary political propaganda has made a number of bad errors in this direction, so that it has bombarded a foreign group with the most strongly worded statement meant to induce fear, and all that it has succeeded in doing is to heighten and strengthen opposition.

More frequently still the object of foreign propaganda is to mobilise forces against threatened aggression. If this is what is wanted it is an elementary mistake to play strongly on the motive of fear. Fear must be allied with confidence in the power of some proposed combination to resist any threat that may be realised.

All this has a bearing on the important differences between the effects of short-term and long-term propaganda. The more the publicist has his eye on the short-term effect, the more he must put all his communications into a frame of emotion, urgency and stress ; the more he must tie them up with some form of public fashion, or whim, immediately suitable to his objective ; the more he must express them in the style of exaggeration and superlative. If he seeks long-term effects he must use emotion, whim, over-statement only to arouse interests which must then be maintained by the more lasting control of the intelligence.

In some quarters it appears to be thought easier to make sure of the effects of short-term than of long-term propaganda. This, to say the least, is highly disputable. In a broad sense the effects of social stimuli are more certain than are the time-limits of their operation. Emotions, in particular, will lag behind the stimuli that stir them up and will outlast the removal of these stimuli; but the actual lag and persistence may vary within very wide limits from person to person, group to group, and situation to situation.

German National Socialists apparently claim to have decided accurately what these limits are for the German people. They have a week or so of preparatory publication in journals and newspapers, a week or so of an intensified Press campaign with the emotional urgency working up all the time, a brief period of comparative rest, then a week or so in which all possible fury is let loose in public speech and on the radio. The ground is now prepared and, if desired, action can be taken. Even supposing that they have gauged correctly the pulse-rate of their own people, it does not follow that other groups, or different situations, have the same *tempo*.

The fact is that short-term propaganda is a gambit which the counter-propagandist had far better decline, unless he is very hardly pressed by circumstances. The real difficulty lies in the frequent

urgency of the need for popular decision. This would be no trouble at all except in a world with a few violently aggressive groups and a number of non-aggressive ones, where the latter stupidly put their political propaganda to sleep save when times of extreme crisis are already upon them.

Long-term propaganda need consider effects only and does not have to worry overmuch about times. It therefore, whatever appearances may suggest, presents simpler psychological problems. Moreover, for the distant effect the emotional and instinctive appeals, which must no doubt be present, especially in the beginning, have to be brought under some form of intelligent control. Intelligence works in the same ways all over the world, though upon different topics, and so if a propagandist can but find a method of putting his communications so that they may safely be left to the intelligent interpretation and control of his audience, this method will have a much wider application than any other. It is clear enough that this means that the propagandist must contrive to set his material up against some kind of internal and consistent standard which his audience will supply for themselves. In his attempt to do this he can appeal to one or all of three common standards: to differences between the right and the wrong, to differences between the sensible and the foolish, and to differences between truth and falsehood.

At present it is perhaps fashionable to laugh at appeals to right and wrong. They are called unstable standards and said to differ radically from group to group and from time to time. For example, during the last War in Europe, the early German propaganda made much of the propensity of Belgian sharpshooters to fire at German troops on the march from the shelter of near-by houses. This action to the German people appeared wrong and was violently condemned. But in America and elsewhere it appeared courageously right and was strongly praised. The difference really lay in the nature of the facts that were considered to be relevant in the two cases, and not in the ways in which conclusions were drawn. To many Americans and others, it seemed that any propaganda which could rest upon instances of this kind must be silly and the German case suffered accordingly. The long-term propagandist can be secure in the knowledge that every year, in every direction, there are more and more people who are effectively moved by the conviction that what is silly is also discreditable.

Appeals to what is right, sensible and true are appeals to human judgment. Once an issue, an action, a statement is judged right, intelligent, or true, it will gain the assent of most people everywhere and, unless it is swept aside temporarily by

violent emotion and instinct, when an emergency arises the assent will pass into practical approval and influence action. In order to set an issue, action, or statement in such a light that it can and will be judged right or wrong, the propagandist must seriously seek out the ways in which the standards involved are constructed in his objective groups. There is no generally valid way of doing this; he must discover the kinds of cases which commonly evoke these judgments in the groups with whom he is concerned, and he must find a way to link his communications to these. Just the same, though perhaps with less divergence from group to group, is true of the standards of the sensible and the foolish. What is commonly regarded as sensible or foolish varies widely from one group to another, and successful appeals can be made only by the person who sympathetically knows his audience and their culture. Criteria for the truth and for falsehood are the same everywhere, but this does not absolve the publicist from the demand to make an empirical social study. The criteria most used are internal consistency, which remains the same for all, and a check against other known facts. It is, however, important to remember that methods of collecting and recording facts in such a way that they receive the greatest possible credence differ from group to group. These differences must be studied by the

propagandist, if he wishes to be effective, for he must know how to use the preferred methods of whatever group he is addressing.

In various ways, therefore, effective long-term propaganda has to learn how to set its issues clearly in the light of standards preferred in particular groups. Once this has been done, human judgment, in the matter of the application of the particular cases to the standards and the drawing of conclusions, must be trusted. The psychological basis of such a procedure is in direct challenge to the theories of the propaganda emotion-mongers. Hitler says that if a propaganda appeal is to be effective the very lowest intelligences of the audience must be kept in mind and everything brought down to their level: "All propaganda must be presented in a popular form and must fix its intellectual level so as not to be above the heads of the least intellectual of those to whom it is directed. Thus its purely intellectual level will have to be that of the lowest mental common denominator among the public it is desired to reach."[1] Such a method can work only if, and for so long as, criticism is forcibly prevented. In an intellectually free world it is a stupid and unintelligent policy. It is amazing that a man who has most vigorously campaigned in favour of radical change and movement in politics should be the most

[1] *Mein Kampf*, English edition, p. 159.

fanatical adherent in the whole world of a *status quo* for human mental processes. He sees them, and wants to see them, fixed for ever in that primitive state out of which they have grown, with infinite pains, but with increasing assurance.

Here, in another way, the problem of the effects of consistency and inconsistency in propaganda comes back again. As usual there are many opinions and little evidence, but for what they may be worth some experimental facts are available. Take a number of people of about the same level of general ability. Divide them into two groups. To one group read or tell a story, repeating it until they are familiar with all the details. Explain that they are going to be interviewed by the members of the other group who, to begin with, will know only the title and not the particular material of the story. They are to answer any questions concerning the first half of the story correctly, but may use their own discretion whether they reply correctly or incorrectly to any question concerning the second half of the story. Give the title to the other group and explain the conditions of the proposed interview. After the experiment set the one group, who at first knew the title only, to reconstruct the story in what they believe to have been its original form, and the other group to construct the story in the form which they judge that they succeeded in transmitting it.

This experiment yields interesting results of various kinds, but it will almost always be found that information rejected as incorrect is refused for two main groups of reasons: (*a*) its inconsistency with other information known or assumed to be correct, and (*b*) its unsuitable nature in view of what may be called the "probabilities" of the situation. In many cases probabilities are hard to estimate, except in a most uncertain way, and so on the whole straightforward factual inconsistency is the criterion used more than any others to identify lies under these circumstances. The persons interviewed, on the other hand, often base their estimates of how successfully they misled their interviewers upon the psychological cues which they think they gave during the examination: slight stammers, laughter, tonal inflexions and the like. All these psychological cues, however, seem to be used relatively little, save by the exceptional interviewer with specially trained interests, though probably the experimental situation makes them more prominent, available and easily detectable than usual.

It seems fair to conclude that internal consistency *is* a matter of great importance whenever any series of obviously connected events is being reported, or any single policy being expounded. On the other hand, if different versions of the same series of events are separated by time, or if a change of circumstances

necessitates a change of policy, internal consistency between the different versions, or the different expositions, is probably inherently of much less importance. The ubiquity of counter-propaganda, however, now makes it almost certain that inconsistencies that are separated by time, or that concern different topics, will be publicly pointed out by an opponent. The best rule for the propagandist is: Always have the strictest possible regard to internal consistency, and where this cannot be secured owing to a change of circumstance, boldly and immediately point out discrepancies and account for them.

Everybody believes that the effects of propaganda are cumulative. The public is to be subjected to a succession of shocks, at first probably slight, but increasing in intensity until their accumulated effect sweeps everything before it, and a whole policy, with all its implications, is accepted. Where practical urgency demands swift action, it is a matter of great delicacy to decide what rate of increased pressure a population will stand. If the rate adopted is too quick, sections of the population may be rushed into action earlier than the generality and all may then be lost. If the rate is too slow, the crisis may come before people are fit for it. No rules can be laid down. The optimal rate of increase of pressure—and certainly there is an optimal rate in every case—depends upon the topic of discussion

and the field of action in relation to the character and culture of the people concerned. It can be decided only by direct psychological knowledge and insight.

With long-term propaganda this particular difficulty of the most desirable rate of pressure does not arise in a serious form. The main reason for this is that the long-term publicist, as has already been stated, can and must concern himself with intelligence as well as with emotions.

Perhaps the greatest bugbear of the propagandist is boredom. It may at first seem odd that appeals which make violent onslaughts upon emotion should produce a state of boredom; but this is neither impossible nor unusual. Broadly, there are two general sets of conditions which consistently produce boredom in human beings. One is that men should repeatedly, and by forces beyond their control, be subjected to situations which make too heavy a drain on their intelligence, and the other that they should in the same way be subjected to situations which do not make sufficient demand on their intelligence. Of the two the second is far and away the more dangerous. It produces persons, or whole populations, stunned, inactive, who have lost their values and the reserves that can find new ones. For the propagandist to produce this state is his unpardonable sin. This is perhaps what the German has recently done to the Austrian. He has set upon a

and interests somewhere which it may then, or later, attach to political issues.

Propaganda, to be effective, must use the idiom of the group to which it is directed, in whatever medium—picture; speech, spoken or written; bodily skills or what not—is employed. It must use this idiom always in such a way as to be just a little, but not very much, ahead of the popular use. In particular what is often called "knowledge of a language" may be of no great help in propaganda, and sometimes it may be a definite hindrance. It is knowledge of the daily use of the language that is required, and of the many other shades of difference in practical culture that go with this daily use. The would-be propagandist could well be asked to attempt some such test as this: he should be given a suitable subject and set to write about it (1) as if he were producing a book; (2) as if he were writing an article for a serious occasional journal; (3) as if he were constructing a leading article (*a*) for a highly responsible newspaper and (*b*) for a newspaper of a more popular type; (4) as if he were preparing a public speech; (5) as if he were going to broadcast; (6) as if he were reporting an actual conversation. The more successfully he can vary his technique and still "get the matter across," the more effective as a propagandist he is likely to be. The more all his versions approximate to the same type, the more

should his propaganda, if he is able to compass it at all, be severely restricted to the occasions and audiences to which his style is fitting. A very great amount of ineffectiveness in propaganda is due to the fact that the wrong people are trying to do the right things.

Will it ever be possible accurately to measure the effects of public propaganda? There are now available and in use a large number of techniques for assessing at least the distribution and frequency of popular opinions, if not of their effectiveness for action. Most of these adopt some form or other of direct question: Should America follow a policy of political isolation? Do you think that a war of aggression may be justifiable? Sometimes a variety of possible answers are provided and people are asked to select one or more as approved. Statements about topics of public interest are given, and have to be ranked in an order of assigned importance or accuracy. The varieties, both in the precise form of investigation and in the scoring of results, are many and ingenious. Much information, most of which is interesting, and some of which may be important, has been collected.[1]

[1] For detailed information, see Albig, *op. cit.*, Chapters XI, XII, XIII; also P. E. Vernon, Chapter XI in *The Study of Society*, edited by Bartlett, Ginsberg, Lindgren and Thouless (Kegan Paul, London, 1939), and see references appended to that chapter.

A review of this work forces two considerations upon the mind which have received less attention than they merit. The first is that the simple question form is usually highly ambiguous, and the second that most methods of opinion measurement now in use depend upon the collection of views from large numbers of individuals each of whom is recording his view as a single person.

When a simple direct question is placed before anyone, the person interrogated must supply his own context, and the contexts supplied may differ so widely that, in fact, answers the same in direction may be contradictory, while answers different in direction may be in entire agreement. Yet for scoring purposes this consideration cannot be given much weight. It is probable that it will be found that a more reliable method is to supply not only the question but also the data on a selection from which the answer must be based. The scoring method will then have to take into account the relation of the reply to the particular facts which are selected as important from among those given.[1]

Again, in so far as social action is a direct reflection of social opinion, it depends in the main upon opinions as they operate inside the social group itself. For many reasons, what a man alleges as his opinion outside and inside a social group may be

[1] See *The Study of Society*, pp. 36–8.

exceedingly different. These differences need a much more careful study than they have been given, and for experimental advance a method will have to be found of eliciting opinions which are genuinely under social control.

Attempts are being made to counter both of these difficulties and perhaps they may be successful.

Almost nothing is yet known for certain about the general functional relationships between the distribution and frequency of opinion and actual social action. It seems certain that widespread opinions do directly affect public behaviour, but concerning the precise conditions under which this occurs and the degree to which it is effective, there is more ignorance than knowledge. These relationships will have to be cleared up before the measurement of opinion can be said to have much practical significance.

It seems desirable to attempt a summary of the main points of this discussion of the effects of political propaganda.

A distinction must be made between short-term and long-term effects. To secure the former it is necessary to foment and maintain a high level of public excitement and the predominant appeals must all the time be to emotion and to sentiment. Among the emotions exploited fear has generally had, and probably must have, a large part to play. Its main

psychological purpose is to force results quickly which, once secured, may almost as speedily become conventional. In practice it never for long periods operates by itself, but must be accompanied by definite promises of positive achievement. It is a very dangerous weapon in general, for its skilful use means that the propagandist must understand the natural *tempo* of reaction in his objective group, and this is not an easy thing to do. Unless very great care is taken premature sectional action may be secured; or, again, a cowering population, ready to stampede, may be the outcome. A third, not unlikely, result is to force the objective group into a state bored and apathetic.

Long-term propaganda is on the whole easier, since all that need now be considered are effects, and these are less difficult to predict than the timing of the effects. The emotional appeal now becomes less violent and the intelligence of the objective group comes more into the picture. The secret of successful long-term propaganda lies mainly in using the idiom of the groups to which appeal is being made in whatever medium of communication is adopted, but in keeping sufficiently ahead of popular modes of expression to hold the people awake, interested and alert. Internal consistency must be a primary concern and if circumstances force an apparent inconsistency this must be openly admitted and accounted

for. When it becomes necessary to attempt to dispel boredom, oblique methods of propaganda have to be developed.

No accurate measurement of the effects of propaganda is yet possible, but many attempts are being made, and these ought to be given the greatest possible public encouragement and support.

Finally, it is important to realise that there is always a lag between the acceptance of opinions and their incorporation in practice. How long this is nobody knows, but it is normally considerable. This is another reason which goes to make short-term propaganda a risky affair, in itself very liable to promote social instability. Probably the course of social development tends to close up this gap all the time, but working against this is the marked and steady tendency to increase the size of the primary social groups. It may be an exaggeration to say " The opinions of one generation become the politics of the next," but the effectiveness of propaganda probably depends more than anything else upon the opportunity and capacity of the propagandist to think ahead and to take his time.

CHAPTER VI

Propaganda for Democracy

No great nation group in the modern world can afford to neglect political propaganda. Even if the results achieved were in general much less decisive than is often thought to be the case, since a belief in the virtues of propaganda has been instilled into most people, any national or political system which ignores this belief will suffer. Yet it has been customary for democratic countries to neglect official political propaganda until they are faced by some serious crisis. Thereby those who are then called upon to direct democratic propaganda are placed at a tremendous initial disadvantage. They are strongly urged by circumstances to plan for short-term effects, but the social order of their countries practically prevents them from adopting most of the tricks upon which the success of short-term propaganda depends. The policy which puts political propaganda to sleep in between crises is, for any democratic State, most unintelligent.

From the point of view of political publicity, the

outstanding character of a democracy is that there cannot be merely a single, official, one-sided statement on any major problem of policy, with all other kinds of statement suppressed. At least two voices must be heard freely: the voice of the Government that is for the time being in power and the voice of the official opposition. Usually the opposition voice is in practice not one but many. Even the official Government voice rarely seems to be able to speak to the same purpose for long. Genuine co-ordination between different Government departments is one of the most difficult things for a democracy to achieve. During the War of 1914–18 it took two or three years of acrimonious dispute and hard experiment before the departments which planned policy, those which carried it out, and those whose job is was to justify the policy and its execution in the eyes of the world, and to prepare for further developments, arrived at even a rather uneasy co-ordination.

Where several voices, not by any means in immediate accord, have to be heard, it is next to impossible to produce the simple, violent emotions which run swiftly to uniform action. Emotions there may well be, but they are the emotions of dispute rather than those of simple action. Divided counsels keep intelligence awake. Reason, or at least rationalisations, have to be made the basis of

most appeals. Propaganda is largely forced into that form which best fits the long view. From this consideration all discussion of propaganda for democracy must begin.

It has been said that the basis of all successful dictator propaganda is the transmission of "the passionate idea." [1] The basis of all effective propaganda in a democracy is a reliable news service. When the main aim is to recognise and develop the common intelligence, and not merely to suppress and outrage it, news alone can give to propaganda its necessarily concrete character; news alone can provide intelligence with its needed factual material. In times of peace this causes no very profound difficulties. Certainly at no time can all news be transmitted: there is too much of it; but the various groups of publicists can be left alone to make their own selections, and the ease with which dubious reports can be contradicted will reinforce whatever sense of public responsibility there may be, and will, on the whole, make for truthfulness.

In war, however, the position is different. The unrestricted publication of news would then often be of service to an enemy, not merely by giving a direction to his counter-propaganda—which would matter little—but by unnecessarily helping his fighting, economic and political policy. In war not even

[1] *Cf.* Childs, *op. cit.* p. 19.

the most democratic State can, or ever will be able to, get on without a form of censorship.

Censorship has been defined as "the process of deleting or limiting the content of any of the media of communication."[1] That is to say it has to do only with an official control of *what* is transmitted, and not at all with attempts that may be made to prevent individuals from receiving what cannot be stopped from coming to them. For example, an Associated Press report from Germany during 1934 stated: "Five persons were sentenced to prison to-day for listening to Soviet broadcasts from the Moscow radio station. Sentences of one to two years were imposed because they tuned in while news about Germany was being broadcast by communists." This is not censorship, but persecution, and there is no place for it in a democracy.

Censorship proper can be effected, broadly, in two ways: indirectly by the nomination and control of individuals who are then allowed to select, shape and transmit news; or directly by deleting or changing news which has been selected and shaped by somebody else, publication being allowed only after such deletion or change has taken place. Both forms have been very prominent during the last decade or so in every dictator country. Only approved journalists or broadcasters are given a licence.

[1] Albig, *op. cit.* p. 228.

"Not everyone has the right to write for the public," says Dr. Goebbels; "that right has to be earned through moral and patriotic qualifications." [1] When the only assessors of these qualifications are the leaders of the single political Party, it is easy to see that "moral" and "patriotic" come to the same thing, and that both are synonymous with "approved political views." Walter Funk stated precisely the same thing in an exuberant passage of extraordinarily mixed imagery. The German Press, he announced, is "no longer a barrel-organ out of which everybody is permitted to squeeze whatever melodies he likes, but a highly sensitive and far-sounding instrument or orchestra on which and with which only those shall play who know how, and in whose hands the Führer himself has placed the conductor's baton." [2]

No doubt all writers for every form of the public Press, all broadcasters, and all other persons concerned in the communication of news and opinions are everywhere selected by one means or another. But their direct selection by Government agency, except for the purpose of official Government contacts with the public, is rightly frowned upon in a

[1] *New York Times*, October 6, 1933 (quoted from Albig, p. 251).

[2] *New York Times Mag.*, July 14, 1935 (quoted from Albig, p. 251).

democratic society in time of peace, and neither can nor should be easily resorted to in time of war. At the same time, the second form of official censorship —the deletion or change of news which has already been written up by somebody else—is, in war, bound to be irritating, wasteful and a relatively inefficient method. It cannot escape dangerous delays just at a time when delays may be particularly undesirable.

On the whole it seems that by far the best policy is to appoint a small censorship Board or group to whom all news of public interest connected with the crisis will come, and by whom it will be selected and distributed. So long as such a Board is concerned only with factual news, and with such official comments which must be made immediately, its advantages will be greater than any of its disadvantages. It will help to secure consistency—always of particularly great importance in a democratic news service—and can avoid unnecessary delay. Two conditions are, however, essential. Such a censorship agency must work on the principle of " the more news for everybody the better," and most important of all, it must be kept in close touch with all planning and executive departments of Government, so that it can both exert a constant influence to see that there is a concerted policy and can be told what that policy is. The second condition is one which it is always par-

ticularly hard to secure in a democratic State, but it is of fundamental importance; for if it is not very firmly secured, different departments will inevitably interfere, each from its own point of view, and the result will be inconsistency and delay, internal contradictions and a vast amount of irritation, and the whole propaganda effort will be seriously weakened.

As regards comments on news other than direct Government comments, the position is not the same. Two plans are possible. The censorship may be able to issue broad rules governing comments, and then trust those who direct the various private agencies which publish and distribute them. This is the better policy if it can be worked. If public irresponsibility in some quarters makes this plan impossible, the censorship must be able to step in and, either in the case of offending agencies only, or of all agencies, insist that comments are sent in for scrutiny before publication. Here, as before, the rules must be to release comments with the least possible delay, and to release without change the greatest possible number of comments.

A censorship which makes a point of suppressing, or delaying, or distorting all unfavourable news and most adversely critical comments is a handicap, and not a help, to democratic propaganda. There may be occasions when a run of bad news in several different directions at once, justifies some "spread

out " in publication. Very rarely, however, is this genuinely important in so far as the home population of a democracy is concerned. Democracies have been told loudly and constantly in recent years that they are effete and decadent, ready to be stampeded by temporary misfortune, and possibly official circles, which often get out of touch with the people, may come to believe that these charges are true. There is literally not one scrap of convincing evidence for them, and no democratic censorship need be nervous on their account.

A war censorship in a democracy, then, must have these main characteristics :

(1) It must operate on the rule of releasing the maximum news and news comments with the minimum delay ;

(2) It must be in effective contact with the policy planning and executive departments of the current Government, so as to avoid, as far as possible, all appearance of disunity of effort ;

(3) It must be able to preserve all the time an *ad hoc* character and must, in fact, fade out as soon as peace returns.

Whether the functions of a censorship should be combined with those of a Ministry of Information is disputable. On the whole there are sounder reasons against than in favour of this practice. An efficient censorship demands critical judgment and

a capacity to estimate immediate effects, rather than constructive and persuasive powers and a gift for looking far ahead. Obviously the two must co-operate very closely, but it is probably better that they should work under distinct controls.

In war, democratic, like other propaganda, has four main directions in which it must operate: (*a*) to the home civilian population; (*b*) to the fighting services and their attached army of technicians; (*c*) to enemy countries; and (*d*) to neutrals. In the case of most large groups in the modern world there is a fifth group of vital interest and importance: (*e*) to colonial possessions and to independent members of the same Commonwealth.

A full discussion of the many problems which arise when all these are considered is impossible here, but the main points in regard to propaganda to each of these five groups can be stated briefly.

First, and far the most important of all, a unified policy must be achieved in all five directions. This is absolutely essential because no democracy can suppress for one objective what it proclaims to another.

So far as the home civilian population goes, the primary aims are the maintenance of a cheerful and high morale and of a willingness to work. It is, however, of no use whatever telling a Ministry of Information that this is their job—they know it

already—without giving them the fullest possible knowledge of the social conditions under which they are most likely to have to work. For example, when war comes a Ministry of Supply, which has to look after the production of arms and munitions, at once assumes a position of preponderant importance in home affairs. If such a Ministry intends to subordinate all other considerations to those of very large-scale production, to demand longer than normal hours of work, few or no regular days of rest, and a general " speeding-up " in industry, the Ministry of Information must know this. For then the latter will know that there will come a time when their appeals must be addressed to a population inevitably strained, fatigued, irritable, and both the tone and the content of the appeals to be made must be adjusted to suit these states of mind. And it is not only a Ministry of Supply that comes into the picture. A Ministry of Labour may be planning large schemes for the transference of blocks of workers from one district to another; a Ministry of Home Security may be going to insist upon grim conditions of " black out " which will mean, among other things, that masses of people will be compelled to work long summer days in artificial light and perhaps with poor ventilation. Finance Ministers may be going to try to secure one or other of the many forms of control of wages. All these and many

similar things a Ministry of Information must be told as early as possible. For it is absurd to suppose that it is possible to secure any kind of a mental state to order, or any particular required kind of mental outlook, without regard to specific social and environmental conditions. The technique must be adapted to the conditions and must change if and when the conditions change. Without co-ordination of policy, and without the full and willing co-operation of all other Government departments, a Ministry of Information in a democratic country is absolutely certain frequently to fail, and is just as certain to be blamed for many failures which are not its own fault.

Once these fundamental conditions for success are secured, a home propaganda can concentrate upon two main lines of communication: (1) news and comments on news, and (2) entertainment.

The rule for the first has been stated already. It is: a maximum of news and a minimum of delay, with the greatest possible freedom for variety of comments.

There are no possible universal rules for the second. Only those people can compass what is needed who are in sympathetic understanding with the masses of the people they address, who know or can learn about their common conditions of life, their common interests and their common hopes.

The aim is two-fold: that the war situation should not become either intolerably burdensome and grim on the one hand, or just a joke and divested of seriousness on the other; and to keep alive those interests which are in no way tied to the war situation, but will be of equal or greater importance when peace returns. The ways to do both will have to vary indefinitely from community to community. In England, it is safe to say, two types of appeal must always be prominent: to humour and to sport. If an English population loses its capacity to laugh its way through depressing circumstances its morale will be on the road to destruction. No comment need here be made of the value, in any English community, of the appeal to sport, save to say that in general the more oppressive the circumstances the greater that value becomes. At the same time, of course, there is many another entertainment interest which must be kept alive as well, and only knowledge and understanding of the people can tell what these are and how they can best be stimulated.

Propaganda to fighting services and to attached experts and technicians has just the same general aims as to a home civilian population: to keep high morale and willingness to serve. Also, so far as news and news comments go the needs and the rules are the same. There is, however, at least one difference concerning entertainment. Very

large numbers, especially among the younger members of a democratic fighting service, have had their careers temporarily interrupted, their dominant interests and immediate aims temporarily diverted. Especially when, as is almost inevitable in modern warfare, there are periods of relative inactivity, many of these are tempted to worry lest they should be at a handicap when the broken career must be resumed, or another career begun. For such people a part of effective entertainment is education, and not merely amusement and relief. From time to time, or place to place, there may need to be a rather more serious strain running through the entertainment propaganda to democratic fighting services in time of war.

Propaganda directed to an enemy country in time of war is generally regarded as having three main purposes: (1) demoralisation, (2) division, (3) provocation. For all three purposes, and also for its own sake, those who direct and shape democratic propaganda to an enemy must never forget that much of their effectiveness must depend directly upon their reputation for accurate and factual information services.

Something ought first to be said about the main channels through which propaganda can, under contemporary conditions, directly reach an enemy country. Comparatively little can be done in a

direct manner through home publications in the daily or other Press ; the enemy censorship will see to this. The starting of " whispering campaigns " and of rumour demands an astute intelligence service at work on the spot and cannot be further discussed here. If the enemy is a dictator State there will be severe penalties for listening to alien broadcasts, and though there will always be sufficient people ready to risk the punishment to make such broadcasting necessary, not very much can be expected of it until the enemy power has already begun to weaken. These are some of the reasons which have made the large-scale scattering of leaflets and cartoons a chief concern of direct propaganda to an enemy in modern days.

There seems good ground to believe that leaflets so distributed may have considerable influence. At the same time, when a democracy uses them against a dictator State, it must remember that there will be as severe penalties against studying the leaflet as there are against listening to an opposing wireless. It is not very much use, especially in the early stages of a conflict, to rely mainly on long pages of closely printed argument. These may be worth while, and may be used more often if success crowns the democratic efforts in the field, but, especially at first, there must be more of the type of leaflet that " he may read who runs."

Nowhere more than in the leaflet is it so necessary that the idiom of the objective group should be used with brevity and with skill. A distant and rather disinterested critic can rarely or never write a good leaflet. An author who is prepossessed by his own or his own people's way of looking at things—when he and his people are alien to the group addressed—cannot and should not be expected to produce a successful leaflet. Yet a leaflet must also carry the stamp of its origin, and not be simply an imitation of the style of the enemy. Leaflets are, in fact, a medium all their own, and require specialist qualities for their successful preparation.

As to the main aims, demoralisation consists, not in the issue merely of resounding and bullying threats, but mainly in (*a*) convincing the enemy that they must lose; (*b*) convincing them that they are suffering greater privations than their opponents and will suffer greater privations still; and (*c*) convincing them that their opponents have taken their full measure without blinking and are united in the belief that the democracy will win. All these can be said or pictured boldly and briefly. Whenever they can be conveyed in a direct factual manner and without much comment this is the better form, particularly in the early stages of a war. Long and violent attacks upon enemy leaders are not usually very effective at first, unless a great amount of

suppressed disaffection already exists. They may become more important and have a greater influence as the time lengthens.

To produce effective division of forces within an enemy country is a more subtle job, to be entrusted for its direction only to people with a close and up-to-date knowledge of potential lines of social cleavage, and to those who can use the particular and perhaps private language of sections in the community addressed. The general line is to endeavour to show—by facts rather than by argument—that certain sections are receiving unfair treatment from the national directorate. This also is likely to become both easier and more effective as a war goes on than it can be at the very beginning.

From time to time, in a war, direct provocation to the enemy may become of tremendous importance. It can take two forms. If internal and sectional disaffection has once been produced, this must be fomented and provoked till it becomes actively aggressive. Such a task is exceedingly delicate and difficult, demanding intimate knowledge and very nice powers of decision and judgment. If disaffection is pushed into action too soon, or if the final spur is applied too late, the effort will have done more harm than good. Secondly, provocation may be addressed directly to the enemy leaders. In one sense this is easier, for the leaders, especially the

political leaders, may not subject themselves to the ban on listening or reading which they inflict on their people. The one overriding condition for success is that home and foreign policy should be as clearly defined and as fully co-ordinated as possible. Without this, provocative propaganda may stir up movements which are wanted only by some of the executive departments, but can be fully countered only if all are prepared for common action. In this way, as in many others, a democratic Ministry of Information cannot possibly be expected to succeed so long as it is compelled to be self-contained and out of touch with other branchès of the Government Service.

For a democratic State at the outset of a war, propaganda to neutral countries is far and away the most important of all the publicity work. It is also the most complex and varied of all such effort. The channels of its communication, the content of its communication, and the forms of its communication have to vary widely from country to country. Its problems therefore are extremely different in different cases, and only one or two general principles can be laid down.

The first and most important rule of all is : choose your propagandists with the most scrupulous care and then trust them. There is no branch of propaganda in which it is more necessary that only those

should be allowed to engage in the job who have first-hand knowledge of and sympathy with the culture and common practices of the people who are being addressed. Moreover it ought to be more fully recognised than it is that long residence among a people is not by itself a guarantee either of knowledge of them or of sympathy with them. Anybody who has lived abroad in the spirit of an exile from his home is rarely any good for the job.

Secondly, important everywhere, but more important in the case of neutral propaganda than anywhere else, and becoming more important still with every passing year, it must be repeated yet again, the basis of all good democratic propaganda is news. This also needs expert direction. For while news distributions to one neutral must be consistent with those to others, the items stressed must vary from one country to another. And only those people who know and appreciate the peculiarities of expression and interest of a country can make that effective selection and emphasis that are required.

In the third place, especially in democratic propaganda, neutral countries ought very rarely if ever to be considered, especially early in a war, only, or even mainly, in the light of possible belligerents. The important thing is to consolidate a peaceful friendship which may then, in case of severe crisis,

find its own active expression. So the neutral propaganda should not all of it be of direct war interest. A community of interests in fields removed from war should be actively sought and found, even while war may be raging elsewhere.

Finally, while much can be done if propaganda is organised from a distance and expressed in Press, radio and cinema, more still will often follow direct personal contacts. In war time this also should be the duty of a democratic Information Service: to seek out men and women who can go to neutrals as friends, with no direct diplomatic, or political or economic mission, but merely as good representatives of the culture from which they come and of its friendliness towards the culture to which they have gone.

Propaganda in war time, addressed by a democratic country to far-off members of a commonwealth or empire, has problems all its own. Its primary aim is to keep alive and vital faith and friendship for the home country and for its policy, and at the same time to leave each member of the commonwealth unimpaired freedom of decision. News, as immediate and as full as possible, remains as ever the foundation of all successful organised appeal. Co-ordination of policy and the frank expression of this policy are as important in this field as in others. If anything, it is yet more urgent that

the propaganda should be cast into the genuine idiom of the people to whom it goes. With all this the appeals made must not be tied exclusively to war policy and war events. In distant communities there will always be an army of people who are most moved to friendship when they can hear or see how the common life is going on at home. They need the documentary film, the descriptive broadcast and article to bring close to them what used to happen and is now happening there. Finally, in war, personal contacts ought to be planned and facilitated as least as much between members of a family of nations as between a belligerent power and neutrals. Suitable representative people of all classes should come and go, often without specific military, economic, or political purposes to serve. These, if they are well chosen, can often do more than any other kind of person to stimulate friendship, to keep it lively, and give it a practical value. They can provide a basis for loyalty and affection which goes far deeper than anything founded upon what either side can get out of the other by way of obvious material advantages.

In every one of these five main directions of activity a Ministry of Information must be deeply and forcibly concerned with counter-propaganda. For the most part this is an *ad hoc* job. Its line has to be determined by its occasion and there are few

generalities that can be of much service. To be effective it must be both immediate and decisive. In a world where transmission is everywhere swift it is of little use to try to catch up with an enemy if he is allowed a long start; and no counter-propaganda whose tone is halting, indecisive and hesitating can serve any good purpose. A man who has the habit of mind to make a good propagandist for a democratic country may still be of little value for counter-propaganda. The latter needs a quicker, more alert intelligence, which can see issues very clearly and state them in simple and unequivocal language. In a general way, good counter-propaganda must work on a relatively small number of issues. It will go out to convict an opponent of inconsistency, of stupidity, of silliness, of falsehood, and of a lack of sympathy for the essential culture of the objective groups. The best available ways of doing these things will vary so greatly from place to place and from time to time that it is futile to try to cast them into categories and rules; but whatever the ways and whatever the media, two things remain of paramount importance: speed and decisiveness. It ought to go without saying that original propaganda and counter-propaganda which come from the same country must be internally of a piece and fully consistent each with the other.

It should now be abundantly clear that the

political propaganda of a democracy cannot and must not simply imitate that of the dictator State. There is much that the former can learn from the latter: a whole-hearted belief in its own weapons; persistence; a readiness to tackle any problem, however big, and not to despise any problem, however small. It can learn the enormous importance of speed and of decisiveness in propaganda. But on almost all counts it is radically different. It does not despise the intelligence of those whom it addresses, as the dictator propaganda does. It does not go all out to short-circuit reason, as the dictator propaganda does. It recognises that men act where their affections, sentiments and emotions are engaged, but that these must and can be led by intelligence without losing their strength. It knows that the stability of a social order does not depend upon everybody's saying the same things, holding the same opinions, feeling the same feelings, but upon a freely achieved unity which, with many sectional and individual differences, is nevertheless able to maintain an expanding and consistent pattern of life. It does not consider that the only thing that matters is the next moment, but plans ahead and for the long view. It is an incident in an educative process: dictator propaganda, as it has been developed, is one of the prime enemies of education.

Propaganda in and for democracy has now a

unfriendliness between differently organised social groups. It is almost unbelievably strange that society has, up to now, left the study of these almost wholly to speculation and to arm-chair analysis. Methods are, however, beginning to take shape which bid fair to set the investigation of such factors, and of the ways in which they operate, upon a firmer and more scientific foundation. It may be a matter of life or death for the democracies of the world that these methods, whether in war or in peace, should be given the greatest possible encouragement and development.

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